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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

GAMES IN RITUAL: A STUDY OF  
SELECTED NORTH AMERICAN INDIAN TRIBES

by



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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA  
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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled "GAMES IN RITUAL: A STUDY OF SELECTED NORTH AMERICAN INDIAN TRIBES," submitted by MICHAEL ALBERT SALTER in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.





## ABSTRACT

The objectives of this investigation were firstly, to determine those Eastern Culture Area rituals in which games were employed; secondly, to ascertain the function of the game-rites within the rituals; and thirdly, to determine the types of games associated with the rituals.

An examination of approximately one-third of the tribes belonging to the Macro-Siouan and Macro-Algonquian Phyla revealed that games were used as rites in four basic but different types of rituals--ceremonies associated with death, sickness, the weather, and fertility.

Fifteen games were linked with these rituals. When employed as mortuary rites they served to comfort the immediate family of the departed and were used as mechanisms through which to distribute both the personal possessions of the deceased and the gifts bestowed on him at the time of his demise. Further, they were believed to placate the spirits of the dead by honouring and unifying them in death. As ghosts were potentially harmful, these game-rites functioned in a protective capacity. The games served as preventive and curative agents when employed for medicinal purposes. They were believed capable of curtailing epidemics, of warding off illness and, when used as healing devices, were either prescribed as remedies in themselves or as catalysts to increase the potency and effectiveness of herbal medicines. Both the climatic and fertility rituals of the Eastern Culture Area revolved primarily around the agrarian based economy of the tribes. In order to facilitate crop growth, games were used to affect a change in the climatic conditions; to promote rain, to terminate periods





of excessive heat, to temper the winds, and to avert inclement weather. As rites of supplication and thanksgiving in the various fertility ceremonies, they served as mechanisms through which assistance could be requested of, and gratitude bestowed upon, those preternatural beings believed responsible for overseeing the growth of the crops.

The discovered play activities were classified according to the model outlined in Appendix B in order to determine the types of games associated with the rituals of this area. It was found that the majority of tribes employed games that contained the elements of physical skill and strategy during the course of their mortuary, climatic, medicinal, and fertility ceremonies.



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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Nature, with equal mind,  
Sees all her sons at play;  
Sees man control the wind,  
The wind sweep man away.<sup>1</sup>

That man plays is an established fact. That he desires to control his environment is likewise unquestionable. Unfortunately for man, however, many forces have proven to be beyond his comprehension. Faced with such a dilemma and spurred by his primeval fear of the unknown, man wasted little time in selecting the path of least resistance on his road to survival. When faced with a situation beyond his control, he employed his ingenuity in an overt attempt to tilt the scales in his direction. If perchance this strategy failed, he drew from his time-proven rituals and launched fervent appeals to the governing powers--powers both real and figments of his imagination. When these appeals went unanswered, he sought the one recourse remaining; that being to placate and please the dominating, and by now, all-powerful forces in the hope that they would bring about the conditions desired. Herein lies the ingredients of magic and religion.

When confronted with the unknown, the uncontrollable or the threatening, homo sapiens, the change-agent, dipped into his arsenal for the weapon deemed most suitable for the task of protecting the well-being of his person. Among the remarkable array of implements and techniques contained therein resides that phenomenon known as play. To thus cope with situations considered beyond the control of mere mortals, the play world of man began to





weave itself into, and become part of his metaphysical world.

### Purpose

The purpose of this investigation was the determination of the relationships that existed between the magico-religious rituals and the games of selected Macro-Siouan and Macro-Algonquian tribes of North America's Eastern Culture Area.

The study had two major aspects:

First, to ascertain those rituals in which games were employed, and the types of games associated with them; and

Second, to determine the place and function of these game-rites within the rituals.

### Justification

Traditional research in physical education has been directed towards scientific and pedagogic ends. While the value of such studies is readily apparent, members of the discipline have recently been challenged to examine more closely the nature and function of the various play forms in relation to the social structure within which they exist. This call to arms has resulted in a new breed of physical educator who has turned towards the social sciences and humanities in his quest for enlightenment.

Spurred by Henry's<sup>2</sup> statement that anthropologists have long understood the role of play in all cultures--a questionable claim--and Brickman's<sup>3</sup> conclusions that the established historical texts in physical education are superficial in nature and contain material of dubious value, these pioneers have undertaken the task of analysing play in extant and extinct, indigenous and alien societies.



While the attention of the majority has tended to focus on the so-called civilised peoples of the Western Hemisphere, a faction has been concerned with the recreational pursuits of tribal societies.

Although widely dispersed, there is a wealth of descriptive data awaiting the researcher interested in the play of non-literate peoples. Studies of the Maori, Fijian,<sup>4</sup> Samoan,<sup>5</sup> Aboriginal Australian,<sup>6</sup> Polynesian,<sup>7</sup> Melanesian,<sup>8</sup> and Eskimo<sup>9</sup> cultures have endeavoured to determine the place and function of specific play forms in relation to various social institutions. Only one attempt of this nature has been undertaken to date, with respect to the aboriginal Indian cultures of North America.<sup>10</sup> The present study should contribute to this growing body of knowledge and will, by examining the games of these peoples in the light of their theologies and sacred practices, supplement the writings of Simri<sup>11</sup> and Henderson<sup>12</sup> and hopefully provide greater insight into the theories and relationships postulated by such authors as Huizinga,<sup>13</sup> Caillois,<sup>14</sup> Roberts,<sup>15</sup> and Sutton-Smith.<sup>16</sup> The end result may well be a more orderly "brickyard"<sup>17</sup> and the positioning of another stone for those play theorists who have hypothesised certain relationships between specific game types and man's involvement with the supernatural.

As important as the professional contributions of this study, may be the value of its findings to those native North Americans who seek to identify with the life styles and beliefs of their traditional cultures. Consider the moving words of Kierkegaard--words which may well have issued from behind the Buckskin Curtain: "One sticks one's finger into the soil to tell by the smell in what land one is: I stick my finger into existence--it smells of nothing. Where am I? Who am I? How come I am here? What is



this thing called the world? What does the world mean?"<sup>18</sup> While there are those who question the rationale behind the retention of one's heritage and ethnic culture, others, such as the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education,<sup>19</sup> have vigorously campaigned for the cause. While their reasons may differ from those of the affluent Caucasian, the majority of North America's Indian population believe that only by regaining and being permitted to retain their heritage will they establish an identity and achieve equality within the larger society. The demands of the now vocal native youth are aptly expressed by Cardinal: ". . . we must be allowed to rebuild our own social institutions . . . we must rebuild our structures of social and political leadership . . . we must restore our family unit . . . we must rebuild communications between the younger and older generations. . . ." <sup>20</sup> Measures short of these may well drive the Indian further down the road of despair into a state of destructive hostility. The cry of "Red Power" is not a fading echo.

It is hoped that this study may, in some small way, help to avert a pending crisis by restoring a portion of a decimated legacy, and by providing greater insight into the traditional life style and form of selected North American Indian groups through an investigation of that cultural phenomenon, commonly labelled play.

#### Delimitations

The following delimitations apply to the study:

1. The difficulties associated with geographically locating specific tribal groups and establishing the boundaries of culture areas, at any one point in time, are readily acknowledged. Similar recognition is given to the problem of determining tribal linguistic affiliations. This study adheres to the classification and placements proposed by the





following authorities:

- a. Culture areas--Driver.<sup>21</sup>
  - b. Tribal territories and the composition of linguistic families--Driver, Cooper, Kirchhoff, Libby, Massey, and Spier.<sup>22</sup>
  - c. The composition of linguistic phyla--Voegelin and Voegelin.<sup>23</sup>
2. The study is confined to those tribes who belong to the Macro-Siouan and Macro-Algonquian Phyla and reside, or resided, within the Eastern Culture Area of North America.
  3. Material pertaining to tribes other than those under investigation is largely ignored unless such data result in a broader understanding of a particular custom.
  4. More than one hundred and twenty different tribal groups have been located within the boundaries of the culture area under investigation. Although a certain number of similarities are evident in their theologies, and magic was so closely intertwined with religion as to be inseparable, the behavioural patterns stemming from their magico-religious beliefs display marked dissimilarities. To further compound the issue, the sacred practices of many tribes have gone unrecorded, while those that have been studied exhibit a remarkable degree of complexity. To compile and analyse the writings in this area would be a major undertaking in itself.
- For the purpose of this study, no attempt was made to differentiate between magic and religion, while sacred beliefs and practices are analysed in depth only when they serve to elucidate an otherwise questionable relationship.
5. Since the advent of the European, the tribal cultures under investigation have, in varying degrees, been subjected to acculturation



and have undergone a process of deculturation. The difficulty of determining indigenous patterns of behaviour, values and beliefs, is readily apparent. As such, relationships between specific play forms and magico-religious practices are analysed according to the established customs and held-beliefs prevalent at the time of their recording.

6. Only those data recorded in, or translated into English or French, and housed in North American institutions, are utilised in this study.

7. The reproduction of pictorial materials and the use of mythological and legendary data are employed only when they serve to clarify a particular mode of behaviour or to reinforce an apparent relationship.

#### Limitations

The following factors limit the extent and depth of the study:

1. Early eyewitness accounts of the various Indian cultures stem from the pens of missionaries, traders, explorers, and the military. While invaluable in a study of this nature, these chronicles tend to emphasise a particular area of interest and are oft-times coloured with elaborate descriptions of the perils encountered by the author in the course of his progress and ventures. The researcher is only too aware of the inadequacy of cultural detail, and the ethnocentric bias inherent in the majority of documents.

2. Even though many tribes had disappeared prior to the discovery of others, Driver and his contemporaries<sup>24</sup> undertook the task of pinpointing tribal territories. Their somewhat arbitrary boundaries are constructed on the basis of data ranging from the Seventeenth through to the Nineteenth Century. Similarly, lack of documentation in certain areas and eras makes



it impossible for this study to analyse all the tribes involved within the confines of any given century.

3. Any historical analysis focusing on a period of accelerated acculturation and deculturation has to struggle with the type and degree of cultural change determining social patterns at any one time. The researcher, viewing a span of several centuries, is thus forced to contend with, and place in their correct perspective, a multitude of theologies, ideologies, social and sacred practices. A dearth of material in certain spheres, particularly in the realm of religion and recreation, and the sometimes questionable expertise of eyewitnesses, together with changing social structures influenced by alien contact, serve only to compound the issue.

#### Definition of Terms

The following definitions apply to this study:

Society: an organised aggregate of human beings, living as an entity and sharing a self-sufficient system of action which is capable of existing longer than the life-span of an individual.<sup>25</sup>

Culture: the totality of learned, socially transmitted behaviour, shared by members of a human society, which includes social, ideological and magico-religious beliefs and patterns of behaviour, together with an established or implied value system, and the manufactured products resulting from this behaviour.

Culture Area: a geographical region, occupied by a number of peoples, in which a characteristic culture pattern is recognisable through the repeated association of specific traits, and through a mode or modes of subsistence related to the particular environment.<sup>26</sup>



Linguistic Family: a number of individual languages grouped together according to a genetic relationship.

Linguistic Phylum: a number of linguistic families grouped together in the belief that they had their derivation in a single archaic language.

Religion: a unified system of beliefs and practices that formalises the conception of the relation between man and his environment. Religion embodies the idea of supernatural agencies existing beyond the observable universe, that are believed to influence, direct or control the course of nature and human life.\*

Ritual: a socially recognised magico-religious pattern of behaviour, employed in situations or circumstances over which the participants possess no effective means of control.

Priest: an officiant who has inherited, or earned the right to preside over a traditional standardised ceremony. Such a person must be an initiate of the society or body owning the rites of the ceremony.<sup>27</sup>

Shaman or Medicine Man: a wonder-worker and healer who, as a result of direct and continued individual contact with the supernatural, has acquired the ability to control the animistic and naturalistic powers of nature. "Shamanism" signifies the recognition of possession by powers or spirits as the primary modus operandi in all essential relations between man and the world-powers.<sup>28</sup>

Game: any active or passive ludic activity, governed by temporary or permanent rules and fixed boundaries of time and space, that exhibits

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\*Magic, in the Eastern Culture Area, when placed within the context of the total supernatural belief system, is considered as an aspect of religion.<sup>29</sup>





an element of competition and criteria for determining success or failure.

Games of Chance: activities in which the outcome is determined by guesses and/or uncontrolled artifacts.<sup>30</sup>

Games of Physical Skill: activities in which the outcome is determined by the motor performance of the competitors.<sup>31</sup>

Games of Strategy:\* activities in which the outcome is determined by a rational choice of the possible courses of action.<sup>32</sup>

### Methods and Procedures

Before commencing a detailed analysis of play activities, it was necessary to establish the parameters of the study. With this in mind, several background areas were researched.

The foremost authorities<sup>33</sup> on the various aboriginal culture areas of North America were consulted so as to determine the schema most widely recognised and suitable to the task at hand. The culture area boundaries prepared by Driver<sup>34</sup> and outlined in Appendix A were ultimately selected.

A survey of research in the field of linguistics revealed the location of individual tribal territories within the Eastern Culture Area and permitted tribal groups to be classified according to their linguistic affiliation.<sup>35</sup> Appendix A contains a detailed breakdown of the tribes falling into the Siouan, Caddoan and Iroquoian Families of the Macro-Siouan Phylum, together with those belonging to the Algonquian and Muskogean Families of the Macro-Algonquian Phylum.

Having established linguistic groupings and the boundaries of tribal territories and culture areas, the more prominent writings on magic

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\*The three major game types, together with their respective subdivisions, are outlined in Appendix B.



and religion were viewed in order to determine the relationships between them. Attempts to separate the two, and there are many,<sup>36</sup> have been based on Christian-Judaic concepts of the sacred and the profane. Assuming that this dichotomy rings true in a contemporary Western setting--and current writers are quick to point out biases and locate flaws in the underlying rationale--the division, when applied to an alien culture, such as that of the North American Indian, becomes absolutely meaningless. As examination of the writings of Alexander,<sup>37</sup> Underhill,<sup>38</sup> Benedict,<sup>39</sup> Hultkrantz,<sup>40</sup> and Radin<sup>41</sup> reveals that as the Indian completely lacked expressions or concepts even approximating current usage of the words magic and religion, his relationship with the metaphysical was not dichotomised in these terms. Religion permeated every aspect of his culture to the extent that not only were boundaries between the sacred and the profane non-existent, but the formulation of such boundaries was not even considered. His beliefs and resultant ritualistic behaviour were, to his existence, as natural as heat to the flame, and attempts to sever one from the other were inconceivable. Thus, even from an ethnocentric viewpoint, these beliefs and practices cannot be polarised. At best, they may be distinguished only ideal-typically and located on a continuum.<sup>42</sup>

This study then, in accordance with the world view of the east coast native, made no attempt to differentiate between magic and religion, for ". . . objectively there is no difference."<sup>43</sup>

A preliminary study was conducted to examine relationships between the games and the magico-religious practices of member tribes of the Iroquoian Family. Results of this investigation, and the expressed belief that specific game types may be associated with religious concepts and



practices,<sup>44</sup> together with the writings of Henderson<sup>45</sup> and Simri<sup>46</sup>--the only two scholars to have attempted an in-depth analysis of play in relation to magic and religion--established the foundations of the study.

#### Overview of the Eastern Culture Area

The Eastern Culture Area, or Eastern Woodlands Area as it is sometimes designated, extends from slightly north of the St. Lawrence River to the Gulf of Mexico, and from the Atlantic Ocean to just west of the Ohio River in the north and the Mississippi River in the south. It includes part of Quebec and Ontario, all New York, southern New England, the middle Atlantic states, and the southern states as far west as Louisiana.

This area contained in excess of one hundred and twenty different tribal groups when the European first entered the region. Although they spoke a variety of languages and dialects, they all fell into one of five linguistic families--families that were affiliated with either the Macro-Siouan or Macro-Algonquian Phyla.

With minor exceptions, the tribes of each family resided in the same geographical region. To illustrate: the Algonquian Family inhabited the north-eastern seaboard and its hinterland; the Muskogean Family lived in the south and south-east; the Iroquoian Family encircled Lake Ontario and Lake Erie; the Siouan Family occupied most of the Carolinas and the Virginias; and the Caddoan Family resided in the south-western section of the Eastern Culture Area.

The natives of the Eastern Woodlands were organised into the largest political units north of Mexico. The League of the Iroquois, for example, founded about 1570, embraced a population of from ten to seventeen thousand





and ultimately incorporated not only most of the Iroquoian speaking peoples, but also many of their adjacent Algonquian neighbours.<sup>47</sup> A number of loosely-knit economic and/or defensive unions existed at the time of the Europeans' arrival. Some, like the Catawba, Monacan, and Delaware-Nanticoke Confederacies, were absorbed by neighbouring alliances, while others, such as the Huron Confederacy and the Choctaw and Chickasaw Nations, were destroyed, directly or indirectly, by the Caucasian intruder. Still others, varying in size and power, were formed and dissolved from the Seventeenth Century onwards.<sup>48</sup> One of these was the powerful Creek, or Muskogean Confederacy, built around the Coosa, Kasihta and Coweta tribes. Unlike most of the other alliances, the Creek State was not a free union of peoples. Groups that subsequently joined or were brought into the Confederacy, while not oppressed, were considered inferior by the founding tribes and were subjected to a process of deculturation.<sup>49</sup> This powerful union of southern tribes continued to expand until it eventually included such peoples as the Alabama, Hichiti, Tuskegee-Koasati, Seminole, Timucua, and remnants of the Shawnee and Catawba.<sup>50</sup> Its death thrust was delivered in the 1830's by the Indian relocation policy of the United States government.<sup>51</sup>

Not all the peoples of the Eastern Culture Area belonged to alliances of this nature. The tribes bordering the Gulf of Mexico, and the Atlantic Ocean as far north as Virginia, were political units in themselves. Among many, the best known examples of which are the Natchez and Powhatan, the rulers had absolute authority, including the power of life and death over their subjects. This was the only area north of Mexico where such absolute power existed.<sup>52</sup>

Political structures of this nature were made possible because of



a subsistence pattern that permitted a semi-sedentary way of life. The native peoples who inhabited this region were the most sedentary east of the Rocky Mountains. They constructed definite towns and villages, which were often palisaded against attack, and houses permanent enough to be occupied for a number of years. The inhabitants of these communities were primarily involved in horticulture, although the nature of the soils and the limitations of native farming techniques demanded that new farm lands be cleared at intervals of between five and twenty years. The result was a periodic shifting of settlements.

Although corn was the dominant crop throughout the area, beans, squash (or pumpkins), sunflowers, and tobacco were also cultivated and were of considerable importance. Agricultural products, nevertheless, probably only furnished about one-half of their necessary food supply. Hunting was still important, particularly in the north-east; wild plant foods, especially nuts and rice, were extensively harvested throughout the area; fish were caught in considerable numbers by the coastal and Great Lakes tribes; while shell-fish were in demand along the coast and a number of inland rivers.<sup>53</sup> Thus the diet of the Eastern Culture Area tribes satisfied every nutritional need and famines were rare because of food preservative techniques, the availability of natural reserves and the possibility of intertribal trade.

Farming was a highly socialised activity with a myriad of rules and regulations. This stemmed from the importance of agriculture in the economy and the relatively small acreage devoted to it by each family. Land was not individually owned but rather was assigned to each family, usually through the female. With the exception of the Shawnee, and possibly the



Quapaw or Arkansas about whom little is known, the peoples of eastern North America lived in matrilineal societies.<sup>54</sup> Under such a social structure, descent, inheritance, and in most cases ownership, were determined through the female line. Nowhere did the women enjoy greater authority in North America than among the Iroquois. Here the women owned the family dwelling, its contents and the tools used to cultivate the agricultural plots. They appointed the tribal representative to the Council of Sachems--the body that governed the League of the Iroquois--and had the power to remove undesirable rulers, and even to act as regents.<sup>55</sup> Even though the females of the other tribes never attained the power and status of the Iroquoian women, the very fact that descent was traced through the female provided them with a considerable amount of prestige and authority. It is possible then to appreciate the place of women in ritual, particularly when it is considered that they frequently served as shamans and participated fully in tribal sodalities.

There appears to have been three classes of supernatural phenomena throughout the Eastern Culture Area--spirits, ghosts of the dead, and deified metaphysical beings. These entities decidedly influenced the daily life of the natives. Every thought or act, which ranged all the way from an amorphous feeling of reverence to the performance of elaborate rituals where each word and gesture was prescribed in advance, was hedged or bolstered by religious belief or practice. All undesirable situations were thought to be caused by the supernatural. In accordance with native belief, these could be avoided or rectified either by appeasing the wrath of the malevolent spirits, by soliciting the aid of benevolent entities, or by correctly manoeuvring impersonal forces.



The following chapters will be devoted to an analysis of the rites employed for this purpose--specifically the game rites<sup>\*</sup>--during the course of the agricultural, climatic, medicinal, and mortuary rituals of the natives of eastern North America.

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<sup>\*</sup>A concise description of each game associated with ritual is contained in Appendix C.





## FOOTNOTES--CHAPTER I

<sup>1</sup>Arnold Impedocles on Etna I.ii.263.

<sup>2</sup>Franklin M. Henry, "Physical Education--An Academic Discipline," Journal of Health, Physical Education and Recreation, XXXV, No. 7 (September, 1964), p. 33.

<sup>3</sup>W. W. Brickman, Guide to Research in Educational History (New York: New York University Bookstore, 1949), p. 23.

<sup>4</sup>F. Stumpf and F. W. Cozens, "Some Aspects of the Role of Games, Sports and Recreational Activities in the Culture of Modern Primitive Peoples: I. The New Zealand Maoris," Research Quarterly, XVIII, No. 3 (October, 1947), pp. 198-218.

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## CHAPTER II

### GAMES ASSOCIATED WITH MORTUARY CEREMONIES

The occurrence of death within a community is rarely considered a joyful occasion. In most cases, anguish and despair are experienced by the friends and relatives of the deceased, a condition that can only be alleviated by understanding, condolence and time. Like the peoples of most cultures throughout the ages, the Indian too, was subjected to a period of mental turmoil under such circumstances. The imposition of social sanctions and religious taboos, bound together by elaborate rituals, may or may not have eased the burden of the bereaved. On the surface, it would appear that an event as solemn as this could not lend itself to activities of a recreational nature. It is somewhat surprising, therefore, to find that games were associated with the mortuary ceremonies of many Indian tribes, including those of the Eastern Culture Area.

#### The Huron

When a member of the Huron Confederacy passed away, his body was enclosed in a bark coffin and placed upon a wooden scaffold. This occurred immediately following a feast prepared in his honour, some three days after death. There is some evidence to indicate that the feast took on many of the characteristics of a wake,<sup>1</sup> although the Huron, unlike many eastern tribes, apparently did not include play activities in their ritual.

During the enclosure ceremony, and in association with the practice of distributing gifts, two round sticks, each approximately one foot long



and several inches thick, were thrown from the top of the bier. When the young women were assembled on one side of the scaffold, the chief handed a stick to one of their members. Similarly, he placed the other stick into the hands of one of the young men congregated on the opposite side. Prizes consisting of robes or hatchets were then offered to any member of the respective groups who was able to wrest the stick away and hold it high in the air.<sup>2</sup> Brébeuf, who witnessed such a contest between the young men, recorded: "they throw themselves upon him in a body, with might and main, and remain sometimes a whole hour struggling."<sup>3</sup> If the sticks were greased, as Voegelin<sup>4</sup> suggests, the struggle for possession would have been an interesting one indeed.

The place of this wrestling match in the Huron burial ritual is unclear, although it may symbolise, and was possibly believed to assist, the soul's struggle to depart its bodily tomb for the supernatural realm. As the activity was contested in honour of the dead,<sup>5</sup> it was conducted in a vigorous, but by all accounts, honourable fashion, with the actual tussle being of greater importance to the mourners than the ultimate victory. The offering of prizes to the victors appears to be related to the general custom of gift giving and to the method of distributing the property of the deceased. It is highly probable that the Huron, like several other eastern tribes, divided the funeral gifts and the personal possessions of the decedent into lots, to be distributed between the winners of these contests.<sup>6</sup> That it was not merely an enjoyable pastime becomes apparent through the observation that upon the conclusion of the contest, each person returned quietly to his dwelling in a continued state of deep mourning.<sup>7</sup>

After an appropriate interval, usually ten days, the casket was



removed from the scaffold. The corpse was then interred, whereafter, ". . . boys vie with each other in a mock contest."<sup>8</sup> Although the writer does not specifically mention the type of contest, he indicates that it was imitative, and therefore probably symbolic in nature. In all likelihood, it was similar to that conducted in conjunction with the initial interment. This, however, may not have been the only activity contested at this time, as Voegelin<sup>9</sup> believes that the Huron engaged in a variety of contests to honour the deceased during the post-burial feast. The nature of these other activities has unfortunately not been disclosed.

Following the tenth-day feast, a ceremony was conducted to bestow the name and rank of the deceased upon a living relative.<sup>10</sup> This ceremony was usually held in the spring--the period when nature renewed life--unless circumstances hastened or delayed the affair.<sup>11</sup> As it was believed that the dead man was resurrected through his name, only a person possessing the same virtues and qualities as the decedent could be selected to be the recipient.<sup>12</sup>

André is one to have committed to paper elements of this ceremony with its associated speeches, feasts and gift giving. The ceremony that he witnessed was attended by some fifteen hundred to sixteen hundred natives. In reference to this ceremony, he writes:

The Captain of the Beaver Nation\* having died three years before, his eldest son had invited various tribes to attend the games and spectacles which he wished to hold in his father's honor. He intended, too, to take this opportunity to resuscitate him, . . . by taking his name; for it is customary to recall the illustrious dead to life at this Festival, by conferring the name of the deceased upon one of the most important men, who is considered his successor and takes his place.<sup>13</sup>

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\*This reference is unclear. As there is no record of a Beaver moiety or clan among the Huron, André may be referring to the Huron Nation as a whole. Certainly their trade in beaver pelts is well known.





Although he does not elaborate on the games played, as this occasion served not only to transfer the name and rank of the departed, but also to honour him, one of the activities may well have been lacrosse,\* for du Peron relates that "they have only one harmless game, it is the game of crosse; they play it in memory of some excellent crosse-player who is dead."<sup>14</sup> However, as the deceased was believed to be in attendance, both in name and soul, the games played probably varied from ceremony to ceremony according to those in which the deceased excelled during his life. It is highly probable also, that as the ceremony was designed to appease his soul, the spirit in which the activities were contested was emphasised more than possible victory or defeat.

Approximately every eight, ten or twelve years, individual graves were opened and the contents transported from the surrounding villages to a central location. Here, the bones were cleaned and wrapped in beaver-pelt robes in preparation for reburial in a common grave. This great Huron ceremony was known as the Feast or Festival of the Dead.<sup>15</sup> The seven or eight days prior to the feast were spent in assembling and preparing the corpses, meeting visitors from other communities, distributing gifts, and in athletic contests. Attending such a festival, Brébeuf noted that "on one side the women were shooting with the bow for a prize, --a porcupine girdle, or a collar or string of porcelain beads; elsewhere in the village, the young men were shooting at a stick to see who could hit it. The prize for this victory was an axe, some knives, or even a beaver robe."<sup>16</sup> According to the author, these prizes were offered in honour of the dead.

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\*The Illinois tribes, similarly, played lacrosse to honour outstanding players who had passed away.<sup>17</sup>



Although any mass gathering permits the opportunity to socialise and frequently results in group play, the athletic contests organised in conjunction with the Festival of the Dead were conducted in an atmosphere deemed suitable to the occasion. As the feast was sponsored to both honour and unite the souls of the deceased, as well as to promote tribal unity and harmony, the emphasis on skilled but fair play was greater than was the emphasis on victory.

Skill contests of one form or another were common at Feasts of the Dead, both among member tribes of the Huron Confederacy and among their northern Algonquian neighbours. Living with the Nipissing, Lalemant<sup>18</sup> witnessed a ceremony of this type at which some two thousand Huron and Algonquian natives were in attendance. The ceremony, remarkably similar to that of the Hurons, consisted firstly of gift giving, followed by a three-part dance, a climbing contest, the preparation of the bones, a mourning ceremony, and finally, a series of feasts.

Here, as among the Hurons, the early stages of the festival were devoted to a contest of skill--a contest in which prizes were awarded for victory. Of this contest Lalemant writes:

A pole of considerable height had been set in the ground. A Nipissirini<sup>n</sup> climbed to the top of it, and tied there two prizes, --a kettle, and the skin of a deer, --and called upon the young men to display their agility. Although the bark had been stripped from the pole, and it was quite smooth, he greased it, to make it more difficult to grasp. No sooner had he descended, than several pressed forward to climb it. Some lost courage at the beginning, others at a greater or lesser height; and one, who almost reached the top, suddenly found himself at the bottom. No one could attain the top. . . .<sup>19</sup>

Lalemant's description of the contest indicates that it was conducted under the assumption that the souls of the deceased were in attendance and as the function was in their honour, so too the contest had to be



conducted in an honourable fashion. Unfortunately, this was not to be the case on this occasion, for a Huron athlete:

. . . provided himself with a knife and some cord, and, after having made reasonable efforts until he reached the middle of the pole, he had recourse to cunning. He drew his knife, and cut notches in the tree, in which he placed his cord; then making a stirrup of it, he supported and raised himself higher, and continued to do so until he attained the prizes suspended there, in spite of the hooting and shouting of the audience. Having grasped these, he slid to the ground. . . .<sup>20</sup>

As the victory by the Huron was considered to have been achieved by unethical means, particularly among such revered company, his fellow tribesmen presented their hosts with ". . . a present of porcelain beads to repair this injustice, which caused the souls of the deceased to weep."<sup>21</sup> Although no evidence exists of physical contests being conducted at the conclusion of the Huron Festivals, the Nipissing Feast of the Dead ". . . concluded with prizes given for physical strength, for bodily skill, and for agility. Even the women took part. . . ." <sup>22</sup> Considering the reputed similarities between the Huron and northern Algonquian festivals, and their frequent trading contacts, it is conceivable that activities of this nature concluded the Huron festivals but remain undocumented. In any event, Hurons were present, and participated in the closing contests at the aforementioned Algonquian ceremony.

It should be pointed out that as the Tobacco and Neutral Nations were part of the Huron Confederacy, it is highly probable that their mortuary ceremonies were influenced, to some extent, by the Hurons. It may well be that some of the rites hitherto discussed, and attributed to the Hurons, were in fact gleaned from these peoples, for many of the early writers tended to apply the term "Huron" in a blanket fashion.

In closing, it is of interest to note that the Hurons divided their



TABLE I

## HURON MORTUARY GAMES AND CEREMONIES

Ceremony	Game	Contestants	Function of Contest	Remarks
Scaffold placement (Three days after death)	Stick wrestling	Men v men Women v women	a. To honour dead b. To distribute funeral gifts and personal possessions	Prizes awarded
Earth burial (Ten days after death)	1. Stick wrestling? 2. Unspecified games	1. Men v men 2. ?	1. To distribute gifts? 2. To honour dead	Prizes awarded?
Name and rank bestowing (Spring following death)	1. Lacrosse 2. Unspecified games	1. Men v men? (Intervillage?) 2. ?	1. To honour dead 2. To honour dead	
Festival of the Dead (Every eight, ten or twelve years)	1. Archery  2. Pole climbing? 3. Unspecified games?	1. Women v women Men v men  2. Men v men  3. Men and women	1a. To honour dead b. To unify dead and living 2. To honour dead 3. ?	1. Prizes awarded  2. Prizes awarded 3. Prizes awarded





tribal affairs into two distinct categories. Those pertaining to war were dealt with on a separate basis, and by different authorities, from those of a non-warlike nature. Among the latter, and grouped together, were feasts, dances, games, and funeral ceremonies.<sup>23</sup> The inclusion of mortuary ceremonies among the other activities of the grouping is interesting. This seems to reinforce the notion that the Hurons did not dichotomise between life and death, joy and sorrow, in the same way that contemporary Euro-American man does.

### The Iroquois

An Iroquois,\* realising that death was imminent, was expected to confess his sins, particularly those associated with the use of "medicines"\*\* employed for illicit purposes in such activities as the games of snow-snake and lacrosse.<sup>24</sup>

On the first or second evening following death, a wake was held in the home of the deceased. Although the immediate family of the departed were absent, the friends and relatives attending viewed this as a very solemn occasion for it was believed that the soul of the decedent was

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\*As elsewhere in this study, the term "Iroquois" refers specifically to the member tribes of the Six Nations (viz. Seneca, Oneida, Onondaga, Tuscarora, Mohawk, and Cayuga) and not to the linguistic family. This is necessary as many of the earlier sources, and some of the later, do not differentiate between the individual tribes, either through ignorance, or on the premise that their cultures were basically the same. Although the latter is not strictly the case, as cultural variations did occur from tribe to tribe, the task of determining the particular Iroquoian tribe under discussion remains. Reference will be made, where possible, to individual tribes of the Six Nations.

\*\*The ancient hunting charms are one of the most powerful "medicines" of this type among the contemporary Iroquois. These charms are believed to have developed an evil quality as hunting is no longer a way of life and are occasionally, although not openly, employed to sway the outcome of a game.<sup>25</sup>



present.<sup>26</sup> As a result, the function was highly ritualised.

The wake commenced with the condolence address, a speech which was repeated after the midnight meal. Normally this was delivered by any competent speaker, although among the Seneca the responsibility apparently lay with the "Head Man."<sup>27</sup> While not highly standardised, the speeches generally appealed to the gathering for their help in assisting the mourners to overcome their loss.<sup>28</sup>

The opening address was followed by the wake game, an activity contested in order to ". . . comfort in some measure the bereaved ones. . ."<sup>29</sup> The bowl game, using bone discs--later peach stones--once served as the wake game among the Iroquois.<sup>30</sup> With the exception of the Onondaga,<sup>31</sup> however, the moccasin game eventually replaced the bowl game as the primary rite of the Iroquoian wake.<sup>32</sup> The Iroquois contend that the concept of employing the moccasin game at their wakes was borrowed from the Delaware.<sup>33</sup> In support of this claim is the fact that songs which accompanied the game were in the Delaware tongue and were not understood by the Iroquoian performers.<sup>34</sup>

Briefly the game consisted of hiding a small ball or stone beneath one of several moccasins arranged on the floor between the two rows of seated contestants. Points were awarded to the team attempting to guess the whereabouts of the hidden objects, according to their degree of success.

The wake version of the moccasin game differed from the social version primarily in terms of its aim,<sup>\*</sup> and its high degree of ritualisation that resulted in somewhat different organisational and procedural patterns.

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<sup>\*</sup>The Cayuga apparently did not play the game on social occasions, but reserved it solely for the wake.<sup>35</sup>



The wake paraphernalia among the Cayuga consisted of six small metal balls, used as counters, and a larger ball which served as the object to be hidden. These, like the wake-drum, were kept by a member of the community who lent them to any family in need.<sup>36</sup> The family sponsoring the wake was expected to provide the moccasins and the blankets under which the tally sticks were placed when won. The stick employed to point out the hidden object, the drumstick used with the drum to accompany the wake songs and the small wooden tally sticks--50 for a child, 100 for an adult--were fashioned by the presiding official prior to each wake.<sup>37</sup> This was necessary as all these items were burnt during the final stages of the game.<sup>38</sup> An exception to this practice probably occurred among those Iroquois, who once employed a mnemonic cane as their official game pointer. The exact role of this cane is unknown although it is believed to have been employed only at the wake of a chief.<sup>39</sup> The fact, however, that many have survived is indicative of their ritualistic value.

The person appointed to conduct the wake was automatically charged with the responsibility of running the moccasin game. The rules and scoring tended to vary from wake to wake, depending on who was in charge and how the scorekeeper had been taught to keep score. This, however, mattered little, as the game's raison d'être was simply to help the gathering remain awake all night.<sup>40</sup> Thus neither the rules nor the outcome of the contest were considered important.<sup>41</sup> In fact, when all the counters were won by a side, they were simply replaced in the pool and the game resumed. Occasionally too, the scoring was ignored completely as the evening wore on.<sup>42</sup> An exception perhaps occurred among the Seneca and Onondaga, where gambling was evidently associated with the wake game.<sup>43</sup>



While the moccasin game is now played between two teams consisting of an arbitrary number of people of either sex,<sup>44</sup> it was, at one time, contested between moieties.\* The opposing teams sat on two rows of chairs facing each other, while those not immediately involved in the rite sat around the wall and watched. Beauchamp<sup>45</sup> claims that among the Onondaga, only the "Keepers of the Faith" participated in the game. These men and women were appointed at the annual Feast of the Dead to serve at all tribal wakes. Part of their responsibility during such an occasion was to sit all night with the corpse. While doing so, they were expected to pass the time "gambling with the shoe."<sup>46</sup> Here also the teams reflected the moiety organisation. The Seneca, on the other hand, did not restrict membership in the game, but expected all those assembled to be active participants.<sup>47</sup>

The proceedings were conducted in a serious vein and "if, during the progress of the game a young person should forget himself, the Head Man . . . takes occasion to point out that at such times light behaviour is unseemly."<sup>48</sup>

The game was initiated, among the Cayuga, with four songs. Once the activity had commenced, the person hiding the object chose and began to sing a wake song to the accompaniment of a drum.<sup>\*\*</sup> The drummer, like the singers

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\*A moiety is a dual division of a society based on descent groups. The two opposing moieties usually include one or more interrelated clans (gens or sibs). To illustrate, the Onondaga are divided thus:<sup>49</sup>

Mudhouse Moiety

Hawk Clan  
Deer Clan  
Eel Clan  
Bear Clan (now extinct)

Longhouse Moiety

Wolf Clan  
Turtle Clan  
Snipe Clan  
Beaver Clan  
Ball Clan (now extinct)

\*\*The Iroquois once employed rasping sticks, rather than a drum, to accompany their wake songs.<sup>50</sup>





who eventually joined in, was a member of the hiding side. The song was continually repeated until the object was located, whereupon it was abruptly terminated. The drum was then handed to the opposition and the procedure repeated.<sup>51</sup> According to Beauchamp,<sup>52</sup> all those involved in the Onondaga game joined in the singing while the object was being hidden. It appears that among the Seneca, a lone singer accompanied by a drummer was responsible for delivering the wake songs.<sup>53</sup> While up to thirty different wake songs were sung by the Cayuga during the course of a game,<sup>54</sup> the Seneca only employed three.<sup>55</sup> "It is to be noted that these [songs] . . . are never used for any other purpose, or at any other time. Indeed, so careful are the people in this respect, that . . . children are not allowed to attend wakes . . . [for] hearing the songs, they might be tempted to sing them thoughtlessly in the course of play."<sup>56</sup>

The game continued until midnight when a break was called and food was served to the gathering and to the deceased. The game began anew following this intermission and continued until dawn. After midnight, the Cayuga used three moccasins rather than the four used earlier in the evening.<sup>57</sup>

As dawn began to break, both sides joined in a final wake song. During this song, the game was either played rapidly or was contested by only two people using two moccasins.\* In both cases, the master of ceremonies burnt one or several wooden counters every time an incorrect guess was made--". . . each counter represents a spirit, [or] a ghost. . . ." <sup>58</sup> When all the counters had been destroyed, the wooden pointer stick was broken in half and together with the drumstick, burnt.<sup>59</sup> "Last of all, he pulls

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\*In some communities, ". . . if the deceased is a woman, two women play; and if a man, two men play during this last song, alternately hiding and searching."<sup>60</sup>



the leather cover off the drum, puts it inside the drum, and replaces the hoop."<sup>61</sup> Unless the wake was to be repeated the following night, the drum was stored away until after the tenth-day feast, whereupon it was returned to its owner.<sup>62</sup>

Finally, before the mourners dispersed, a gun was fired outside the door.<sup>63</sup> The gunshot signified, and was believed to assist, the departure of the soul.

As hitherto indicated, the Onondaga employed both the bowl game and the moccasin game at their wakes. They also, however, played a form of dice on this occasion--a game in which eight button-shaped bone dice were cast from the hand onto a blanket. The basic difference between the social and wake versions of this activity lay in the scoring mechanism. In the social game, beans were used to keep score, while strips of coloured cloth were substituted in their place at the wake. It should be noted that these strips could be any colour except black--the colour symbolising death. The cloth strips, like their counterparts in the moccasin game, were burnt at the conclusion of the contest.

The selection of the wake game lay in the hands of the individual responsible for conducting the ritual. If, however, the deceased was known to have favoured one of these games or had dreamt of one of them prior to death, then family preferences were taken into consideration. Whichever game was chosen served primarily as a device for remaining awake and maintaining the night long vigil.<sup>64</sup>

Burial of the corpse, along with certain requested personal possessions, occurred following the wake, but prior to the tenth-day feast. These possessions frequently included gaming implements, such as a favourite



snow-snake.<sup>65</sup> As certain "medicines" were considered individualistic and potentially harmful, those ceremonial and medicinal artifacts which had been passed on via supernatural decree, or had been constructed specifically for his welfare during life, were also buried with him. Thus it was not uncommon for the deceased to "take along" items such as the ball, the stick or snow-snakes that had been used on his behalf during medicinal football, tug-of-war, or snow-snake games.<sup>66</sup>

It is highly probable that the Seneca engaged in wrestling matches of a type similar to the Huron in conjunction with the burial ceremony. Activities of this nature, in which the contestants fought en masse for possession of an object, probably a stick, served not only to honour the deceased but, more importantly, as a means of distributing the many gifts bestowed on him at the time of his demise.<sup>67</sup> Jackson<sup>68</sup> noted that, on other occasions, these items were distributed by holding each aloft in turn and permitting the young men to dash forward and attempt to snatch them.

A Feast of the Dead was held ten days after death, for it was on this day that the soul was believed to depart the earth.<sup>69</sup> During this ceremony, the property of the deceased was distributed by gambling.<sup>70</sup> Although the game has remained undocumented, it is possible that, like the Wahpeton and Sisseton Dakota, the bowl game may have served as the mechanism through which to distribute these possessions.\* The stick-wrestling contests previously described, may also have been utilised for this purpose

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\*While the scoring was somewhat more complex in the Dakota "ghost gamble" than it was in the Iroquoian bowl game, the fact that fruit-stone dice and a bowl were common to both games, attests to their similarity. Among the Dakota, this game was used solely as a means of dividing and distributing the property of the dead.<sup>71</sup>



during the tenth-day feast.

Dead Feasts were also conducted annually, as well as in response to individual dreams.<sup>72</sup> The literature here is unfortunately vague and does not indicate whether or not play activities were included as part of these ceremonies. Voegelin,<sup>73</sup> however, feels that the dead were probably honoured with a variety of contests on these occasions and that one of the activities may well have been the moccasin game.

A notable exception did occur in conjunction with the raising of a new Iroquois chief. When a Sachem<sup>\*</sup> of the Six Nations passed away, his contemporaries assembled in the main village of the tribe that had suffered the loss. Their gathering was both to mourn the passing of a peer and to pass final judgment on his successor.<sup>74</sup>

The condolence and installation ceremony was extremely formal and traditional.<sup>75</sup> The first part of the ceremony, conducted according to the Book of Rites,<sup>\*\*</sup> was ". . . confined to expressions of reverence for the great departed. . . ."<sup>76</sup> This was followed by the installation of the newly designated chief, and was concluded with the Kareuna--a hymn that ". . . may be described as an expression of reverence . . . for the dead. . . ."<sup>77</sup>

Morgan<sup>78</sup> reports that the several days following the ceremony were given over to various types of festivities, the daylight hours being devoted

\*The Council of Sachems was responsible for the external affairs of the Iroquois League. Positions on this council were hereditary, although subject to ratification by the current Sachems and the tribal women. Each of the six tribes had representation, although unequal, on the fifty member council.<sup>79</sup>

\*\*The older tribes--Mohawk, Onondaga and Seneca--used the Canienga Book of Rites, which while similar, was much more dignified and formal than the Onondaga Book of Rites used by the Cayuga, Oneida and Tuscarora.<sup>80</sup>





TABLE II  
IROQUOIS MORTUARY GAMES AND CEREMONIES

Ceremony	Game	Contestants	Function of Contest	Remarks
Pre-burial wake (First or second evening after death)	1. Bowl game 2. Moccasin game 3. Dice game	1. Men and women? (Intermoiety?) 2. Men and women (Intermoiety) 3. Men and women? (Intermoiety?)	1. To comfort bereaved 2. To comfort bereaved 3. To remain awake	2. Gambling among Seneca and Onondaga
Burial	Stick wrestling	Men v men Women v women?	a. To honour dead b. To distribute funeral gifts	Prizes awarded
Tenth-day feast (Ten days after death)	1. Bowl game? 2. Stick wrestling?	1. Men and women? 2. Men v men? Women v women?	1. To distribute possessions 2. To distribute possessions	1. Prizes awarded 2. Prizes awarded
Annual Dead Feast (One year after death)	1. Moccasin game? 2. Unspecified games	1. Men and women (Intermoiety?) 2. ?	1. To honour dead 2. To honour dead	
Condolence and Installation (Following the death of a chief)	1. Footraces 2. Lacrosse?	1. Men v men (Intertribal) 2. Men v men? (Intertribal?)	1. To honour new chief 2. To honour new chief	1. Pre-race preparations 2. Pre-game preparations?



to athletic contests and the evenings to dancing and feasting. He specifically mentions footracing as one of the activities contested during this period.<sup>81</sup> Although little description is provided, this witness indicates that the competitors underwent a period of training prior to the contests. The races themselves were in the nature of intertribal competitions and saw all the runners dressed in the same manner for the race as for the game of lacrosse.<sup>82</sup>

While Morgan does not mention other games on this occasion, it is difficult to believe that the "several day period" was devoted solely to footracing. It is possible that, like the equivalent Huron ceremony, lacrosse was also among the activities contested here.

The relationship of the games to the actual condolence and installation ceremony is questionable. They do not appear to be an integral part of the ceremony, particularly the mourning section. It is more likely that they were conducted partly in honour of the newly elected chief and the other Sachems--in the same way that games today are used to entertain visiting Heads of State--and partly to permit the gathering to socialise and enjoy themselves following the period of inactivity resulting from the loss of their chief. In a sense, the contests symbolised the vigorous continuation of the Iroquois League.

### The Quapaw

As elsewhere in the study, information on the recreational activities of the Quapaw tribe has been derived from its cognates--in this case, the Omaha, which has been able to preserve its traditional tribal ways and rites. It should be made clear that, although the sacred practices of the Quapaw and Omaha bore a strong resemblance to one another,<sup>83</sup> they were not identical.



It cannot, therefore, be stated with any degree of certainty that the games discussed, and the relationships established here, were common to both groups.

Both the bowl game and the moccasin game were popular social activities and involved extensive gambling. The former was considered a woman's pastime, while the latter was contested solely by the men.<sup>84</sup>

Although there is no evidence to indicate that either game served as a mortuary rite, it is interesting to note that songs were sung in conjunction with the moccasin game. These were sung by the non-playing supporters of the guessing side, while the opposition was in the process of hiding the small stones employed in the game.\* The songs consisted mainly of vocables, however, one at least contained the words "Little stone, what are you making?"<sup>85</sup> This phrase appears out of place in a purely social game and seems to suggest that the game, at an earlier period, may have been employed for divinatory purposes.

Several other facts support the contention that the game of "hiding the stones" may have once been used on occasions other than purely social. In the first instance, the number of active participants was restricted to four, a number that corresponded with the four world-quarters and was considered sacred. Secondly, the four moccasins under which the stones were hidden had to be positioned on the ground in a specific way,<sup>86</sup> and finally, the player, whilst holding the object, moved his outstretched arms back

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\*At an Iroquois wake, songs were sung continuously by the hiding side, throughout the hiding/guessing phases of the game. At the Delaware wake, on the other hand, the songs, being the property of the guessing side, were only sung while the group was actively searching.



and forth in unison with the rhythm of the accompanying song.\*

Whether or not the Quapaw, like the Delaware, once used the moccasin game as a medium of divination during the course of their funeral ceremonies remains unknown. The preceding factors do suggest, however, a certain degree of ritualisation in the game.

One activity that has been definitely linked with the funeral ceremony is that of footracing.<sup>87</sup> Following the actual burial, a feast was given in honour of the departed by his immediate family. At the conclusion of this feast, the younger members of the tribe competed against each other in a race, while the family retired to the grave-site to continue their mourning. If the deceased were a male, only those young men considered as his friends were eligible to compete. Similarly, if the decedent were a female, only the young women who had been her friends during life were permitted to run.

No information exists as to the length of the contest, however, it is known that prizes, contributed by the family of the departed, were distributed by a personal friend at the conclusion of the race. It appears likely that the majority of the contestants, if not all of them, were presented with one or more gifts in accordance with their final placing--the rationale underlying this being that the race was conducted primarily as a means of distributing the property of the dead person,<sup>88</sup>

Thus, the footraces of the Quapaw, like those of the Iroquois, were not directly connected with the condolence ceremony, but rather served related purposes. In a similar fashion, races were not held by these two

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\*This action was observed in a variation of the moccasin game--a variation in which the stone was hidden in one of the hands rather than under a moccasin.<sup>89</sup>





TABLE III  
QUAPAW MORTUARY GAMES AND CEREMONIES

Ceremony	Game	Contestants	Function of Contest	Remarks
Pre-burial wake	Moccasin game?	Men v men	Divination	Gambling
Burial	1. Footraces 2. Stick wrestling	1. Men v men Women v women 2. Men v men? Women v women?	1. To distribute possessions 2a. To honour dead b. To distribute funeral gifts	1. Prizes awarded 2. Prizes awarded



peoples in conjunction with their mortuary ceremonies, following every tribal death. The Iroquois only held footraces with the passing of one of their chiefs and there is reason to suspect that the Quapaw only conducted them in association with the decease of a youth.<sup>90</sup>

Evidence suggests that the Quapaw also engaged in a series of group wrestling matches, in which the contestants struggled for possession of a greased stick during the course of the post-burial rite.<sup>91</sup> This activity served to honour the departed and as a means of distributing the many gifts brought by the mourners.<sup>92</sup>

It should be mentioned in conclusion that these people adopted a very realistic stance on the subject of death. Fletcher<sup>93</sup> reports discovering a child's toy coffin containing a moulded clay baby, during the course of her field work--a rather unusual, and to some perhaps macabre, toy by contemporary western norms. Thus, unlike many cultures where the topic of death is skirted, these Indians accepted it as a natural and inevitable, although by no means final, point on a road they were destined to travel.

### The Delaware

While the Delaware were instrumental in modifying the mortuary practices of the Iroquois, the Delaware rituals themselves were apparently influenced, to some extent, by those of their neighbouring kin, the Munsee.<sup>94</sup>

Of the three major Delaware mortuary ceremonies, only the initial, or wake ceremony, has been fully documented. A wake was held every night between the time of the decease and the burial, a period that may have been as long as ten days.<sup>95</sup> These were attended by all those who wished to pay their respects to the departed and his family. Prior to the wake,



two men and two women were selected to act as pall-bearers.\* To the two male pall-bearers fell the responsibility of conducting the ritual.

The major rite of the wake involved the moccasin game,<sup>96</sup> a game that was reserved solely for the funeral ceremony.\*\* All those attending who wished to participate in the game were eligible to do so.<sup>97</sup> They divided into two teams--men in one, women in the other--and sat on opposite sides of the room, one group facing the east and the other facing the west.\*\*\*

Each team provided four moccasins and took turns at hiding the object beneath one of the moccasins in their set. While there was apparently no restriction as to which person did the actual hiding for the team, only the pall-bearers could attempt to guess the location of the object for their respective side.<sup>98</sup>

Both groups had their own wake songs which were sung either by the player after he had found the object,<sup>99</sup> or by the drummers while the search was in progress.<sup>100</sup> The drummers sat away from the players and accompanied the songs with water-drums.\*\*\*\* Separate score-keepers, employing counter sticks, were charged with keeping the score of each team.

It is difficult to assess the emphasis placed on victory during

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\*The Delaware were divided into three ceremonial groups--Tortoise, Wolf and Turkey. If the deceased, for example, was a member of the Wolf group, then one male and one female pall-bearer were chosen from the Turkey group, while the other male and female pall-bearers represented the Tortoise group.<sup>101</sup>

\*\*There is reason to believe that this game was once played on social occasions and had only recently become associated with the Delaware wake.<sup>102</sup>

\*\*\*This formation suggests a symbolic contest between opposing world quarters although its exact significance has been lost in obscurity.

\*\*\*\*The Delaware, like the Iroquois, once employed rasping sticks to accompany their wake songs.<sup>103</sup>



this occasion. Speck's informant<sup>104</sup> states that there was considerable deception during the guessing on the part of those who had hidden the object, which may indicate that every attempt was made to win. However, the scoring system seems to negate this, as a counter (point) was only awarded for a successful guess, and a successful guess resulted in the hiding/seeking roles being reversed. Theoretically, on this basis, both teams would end up with an equal number of counters. Unless this was the aim of the contest, it seems likely that the method of scoring has been incorrectly related. Several factors seem to indicate that victory may not have been that important. In the first place, gambling, which always promoted serious competition, does not appear to have been associated with the wake game.\* Secondly, in the older social version of the game, a victory dance was performed by the men after each counter was won.<sup>105</sup> This had been deleted from the wake game, partly out of respect for the deceased, and partly because the purposes of the two games differed. Finally, and in direct contrast with the Iroquois, levity was customary during the playing of the game<sup>106</sup>--a mode of behaviour that was uncommon during seriously contested games. On the other hand, and of considerable importance, is the fact that the game was believed to contain an element of divination.\*\* It was thought that if the team sitting on the eastern side defeated their western opponents, someone present would die within the year.<sup>107</sup> As no-one

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\*This is questionable, however, for Adams<sup>108</sup> distinctly mentions gambling in conjunction with his description of the Delaware moccasin game. Although he does not specifically relate the game to the wake, there is little doubt that the activity he describes was a funeral game.

\*\*Brinton suggests that the Delaware bowl game was also once used ". . . as a means of telling fortunes."<sup>109</sup> It is possible that it originally served as the Delaware wake game, rather than the moccasin game, as was the case with the Iroquois.





was anxious to precipitate such an event, victory must have been considered important--victory, that is, by the western team. Whether or not the game was conducted in such a fashion as to ensure a western victory is questionable. Nevertheless, the possibility of the eastern team winning still remained. The danger ultimately resulted in the discontinuation of the game.<sup>110</sup>

The function of the moccasin game in the funerary programme may well explain the "levity" on what must be considered a sombre occasion. As the corpse lay in the same house,<sup>111</sup> the Delaware viewed the wake game as a way of keeping up the spirit and thus lightening the grief of the mourners.<sup>112</sup> Any additional challenge or distraction, such as the deceptive motions employed to mislead those searching for the object, or the occasional frivolous comment, could only serve this cause.

As morning approached, the women reduced the number of moccasins to three, then two, and finally one, thus terminating the game. The removal of each moccasin ". . . was a signal for a change in the repertoire of songs in the series."<sup>113</sup>

Whether the Delaware burnt the game counters and drum sticks\* with the coming of dawn, as did the Iroquois, is unknown. The pall-bearers did, however, discharge rifles both prior to the wake and again just before sunrise, to symbolise the departure and upward movement of the soul of the deceased.<sup>114</sup>

Voegelin<sup>115</sup> states that wrestling matches were held in association with the burial rites. The strong cultural affiliation between the Delaware, Huron, Iroquois and Shawnee suggests that these contests were in all

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\*A pointer stick was not used in the Delaware moccasin game.



TABLE IV  
DELAWARE MORTUARY GAMES AND CEREMONIES

Ceremony	Game	Contestants	Function of Contest	Remarks
Pre-burial wake (Every night until burial)	1. Moccasin game	1. Men v women	1a. To comfort bereaved	1. Gambling?
	2. Bowl game?	2. Men v women?	b. Divination 2. Divination	
Burial	Stick wrestling	Men v men? Women v women?	a. To honour dead b. To distribute possessions	Prizes awarded



likelihood a form of stick wrestling or "retain-the-object." The competitions, conducted in honour of the departed, were employed as a mechanism by which the personal possessions of the deceased were distributed--the winner of each match being awarded a share of the items at stake.

A feast of the dead was held eleven days after death and another on the first anniversary of the death,<sup>116</sup> however, there is no evidence to indicate that games formed a part of these rituals.

### The Shawnee

Although the Shawnee consisted of five separate divisions,\* their funeral rites, with minor exceptions, conformed to a well-defined tribal pattern.<sup>117</sup>

The funeral services normally lasted for four days, the first night being spent in a vigil beside the corpse. At this time, the funeral guests presented gifts, consisting of pottery and jewellery, to the deceased. The gift-presentation ceremony was accompanied by a series of individual speeches and group singing.<sup>118</sup> The burial, which occurred the next day, was followed by an all-night wake on the third evening. This event provided an opportunity to eat the last meal with the dead<sup>119</sup> and to farewell the spirit of the departed.

The contemporary Shawnee do not play a game as part of this wake, but rather pass the evening narrating tribal myths and tales. Voegelin<sup>120</sup> seems to infer, however, that dice games involving gambling may have been an integral part of the early Shawnee wakes. If, as suggested, obsolete Shawnee burial rites correlate with Seneca funeral practices,<sup>121</sup> this may

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\*Shawnee origin myths seem to indicate that these five divisions may once have been distinct tribes who amalgamated to form a confederacy.<sup>122</sup>



well have been the case, for Shimony<sup>123</sup> states that the bowl game, before being replaced by the moccasin game, served as the major Iroquoian wake rite.

Immediately following the wake with its associated dead feast and dance, a contest was held to both honour the dead<sup>124</sup> and to distribute those gifts bestowed on the departed during the first night vigil. This contest, in many ways, resembled the Huron stick wrestling rite discussed earlier. The assembled gifts were divided into lots<sup>125</sup> and the younger mourners encouraged to compete against each other for them. Gifts were awarded to those contestants able to secure and retain possession of a designated object--the object employed being at times a strip of buckskin, a smooth stick, a greased stick<sup>126</sup> or a length of greased string.<sup>127</sup>

In some cases, ". . . the youth who engaged in the contest raced to gain possession of a smooth stick which, after it was won, had to be retained by the winner who then received one of the lots of gifts."<sup>128</sup> The distance the competitors were required to cover is not recorded, however, the footrace brings to mind the mortuary rites of the Quapaw, who employed contests of this nature as a means of distributing the personal possessions of their deceased.<sup>129</sup>

One seasonal year after death, a special condolence ceremony was held for the surviving spouse.<sup>130</sup> This ceremony, lasting four days, involved only those who had attended the funeral, except when the deceased in question was a chief, whereupon the entire community was expected to be present. Like the burial ceremony, this occasion was also one of extensive gift giving.<sup>131</sup> Following the dance concluding the dead feast, these gifts were assembled, ". . . divided into lots and contested for.





TABLE V  
SHAWNEE MORTUARY GAMES AND CEREMONIES

Ceremony	Game	Contestants	Function of Contest	Remarks
Post-burial wake (Two days after burial)	1. Bowl game 2. Stick wrestling	1. Men and women? 2. Men v men? Women v women?	1. ? 2a. To distribute funeral gifts b. To honour dead	1. Gambling 2. Prizes awarded
Annual Dead Feast (One year after death)	String wrestling	Men v men? Women v women?	a. To distribute gifts b. To honour dead	Prizes awarded



A greased string was offered the participants, and the person who secured and retained possession of this string was adjudged the winner and awarded a present from the pile of goods."<sup>132</sup>

Although the contest served primarily as a means of distributing the many items bestowed on the immediate family of the departed, it, like the rest of the ceremony, was conducted in honour of the decedent. In a sense, this event also acted as a mechanism by which the gratitude of the spouse could be conveyed to the gathering for their comfort and assistance.

Voegelin<sup>133</sup> states that both the contest and dance were dropped from the Shawnee mortuary practices sometime in the 1820's, probably as a result of government pressures against "give-away" or potlatch ceremonies.

#### Summary

Little is known of the mortuary customs of the remaining tribes of the Eastern Culture Area, particularly with respect to the place and function of games within their respective ceremonies.

The Nanticoke were reputed to have held a feast of the dead on the anniversary of each tribal death. At this time, the large number of donated items were assembled and divided into lots. Following the feast and dance, they were distributed to the gathering on the basis of individual success in a series of physical contests--contests conducted in honour of the departed.<sup>134</sup> Presumably, these competitions were a form of "keep-the-object," similar in nature to those discussed in conjunction with the mortuary practices of the Shawnee. Unlike the Shawnee, however, it is known that the Nanticoke did not use a greased object as the focus of their game.<sup>135</sup> Contests of this type were only conducted during the annual dead feasts and did not occupy a place in the initial Nanticoke burial ceremonies.<sup>136</sup>



That the Choctaw once employed the moccasin game as part of their mortuary practices is confirmed by Swanton, who, citing Halbert, recalls that the men sometimes played "hidden bullet" at the last "big cry" for the dead.<sup>137</sup> The place and function of the game in their ritual has not been fully documented, nor have the actual occasions on which it was contested. Halbert's reference, however, is undoubtedly to a post-burial ceremony.<sup>138</sup>

There is no evidence of games being employed by the members of the Muskogean Family, other than the Choctaw, during the course of their mortuary services. Grave-site excavations, however, have occasionally revealed chunkee stones\* buried with the body. Myer,<sup>139</sup> conducting field work in Tennessee, discovered objects of this nature in a child's grave. Similarly, ". . . dice have been found in many . . . graves in [Tennessee] . . . Kentucky, Arkansas, Mississippi, and elsewhere. They have been found in the graves of adults as well as of children."<sup>140</sup> Whether these were considered to serve as talismen or were interred for some other reason, remains a mystery. However, one thing is clear. As the dice were not of the button-shape variety, but were made from the astragalus bones of a deer, they were extremely ancient--a fact supported by dating techniques. In all likelihood, then, they were products of the very early Creek or Natchez cultures. The burial of the game implements with the deceased has not been reported in association with the later Creeks or Natchez, nor among any of the other Eastern Culture Area tribes, with the exception of the Iroquois.

Although lacrosse, as far as can be determined, was not associated

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\*These were stone versions of the wooden hoops used in the northern hoop and pole game.



with the mortuary practices of the south-eastern cultures, the status of the game among several of them is clearly indicated by a common post-death practice. Following the demise of a native, certain taboos were imposed on the surviving spouse by the relatives of the departed--taboos which varied considerably in both scope and duration from tribe to tribe. A game of lacrosse, however, served as one of the rare occasions on which the Shawnee, Creeks, and Alabama<sup>141</sup> saw fit to free the individual concerned, at least temporarily, from the bonds of these taboos.

In summary, while the games have only been documented within the mortuary practices of seven eastern cultures, they were associated with all the major mortuary ceremonies, viz. the pre-burial wake, the burial ceremony, the post-burial wake or ceremony, the tenth-day feast, the annual dead feast, the condolence and installation/name and rank bestowing ceremony, and the Festival of the Dead. A possible exception was perhaps the tenth-day feast, although there is evidence to suggest that play activities also formed a part of this ritual.

It is known that archery, the bowl game, a hand-dice game, foot-racing, lacrosse, the moccasin game, and a form of wrestling or retain-the-object, were contested on these occasions. There is a distinct possibility too that additional contests, such as pole climbing, were included in some of the rituals.

While the sex and age of the competitors has, in most cases, gone unrecorded, it appears that the games were contested primarily by the adults. Except for the more vigorous activities, no distinction was made regarding the sexual composition of opposing teams.

The participants, occasionally competing for material rewards,





TABLE VI  
MORTUARY GAMES AND CEREMONIES IN THE EASTERN CULTURE AREA

	Huron	Iroquois	Quapaw	Delaware	Shawnee	Nanticoke	Choctaw
Archery	Festival of the Dead						
Bowl game		Pre-burial wake		Pre-burial wake?	Post-burial wake		
		Tenth-day feast?					
Dice game		Pre-burial wake					
Footraces		Condolence and Installation	Burial				
Lacrosse	Name and rank bestowing	Condolence and Installation?					
Moccasin game		Pre-burial wake	Pre-burial wake?	Pre-burial wake			Post-burial ceremony
		Annual dead feast?					



TABLE VI (continued)

	Huron	Iroquois	Quapaw	Delaware	Shawnee	Nanticoke	Choctaw
Pole climbing	Festival of the Dead?						
Wrestling (retain-the-object)	Scaffold placement. Burial?	Burial  Tenth-day feast?	Burial	Burial	Post-burial wake  Annual dead feast	Annual dead feast	
Unspecified games	Burial. Name and rank bestowing  Festival of the Dead?	Annual dead feast					



viewed the games as serving one or more of the following purposes:

1. to honour the deceased
2. to honour the successor of the deceased
3. to unify the dead
4. to promote tribal unity
5. to comfort the bereaved
6. to distribute the personal possessions of the deceased
7. to distribute the gifts bestowed on the deceased, and/or
8. to divine the future

That games formed a part of the mortuary ceremonies of certain eastern tribes is apparent. What is questionable, however, is whether the natives viewed these as "play" activities considering the circumstances which promoted them. It is highly likely that an individual involved in one of the contests hitherto described would not consider himself to be "playing." Rather, he would probably view the activity as an essential part of the ritual in question, differing only from the other rites by virtue of the way in which it was conducted.



## FOOTNOTES--CHAPTER II

<sup>1</sup>Elisabeth Tooker, "An Ethnography of the Huron Indians, 1615-1649," Bureau of American Ethnology, Bulletin No. 190 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1964), p. 129.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 131.

F. Gabriel Sagard Théodat, The Long Journey to the Country of the Hurons, ed. by George M. Wrong, trans. by H. H. Langton (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1939), pp. 207-208.

<sup>3</sup>Jean de Brébeuf, "Le Jeune's Relation, 1636," The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents, ed. by Reuben Gold Thwaites, Vol. X (Cleveland: The Burrows Brothers Company, 1897), p. 271.

<sup>4</sup>Erminie Wheeler Voegelin, "Mortuary Customs of the Shawnee and Other Eastern Tribes," Indiana Historical Society, Prehistory Research Series, II, No. 4 (March, 1944), p. 304 and p. 362.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 315.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 304 and p. 315.

<sup>7</sup>Brébeuf, "Le Jeune's Relation," p. 271.

<sup>8</sup>Joseph Jouvençy, "The Jesuit Relations," The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents, ed. by Reuben Gold Thwaites, Vol. I (Cleveland: The Burrows Brothers Company, 1896), p. 265.

<sup>9</sup>Voegelin, "Mortuary Customs of the Shawnee," p. 359.

<sup>10</sup>James George Frazer, Taboo and the Perils of the Soul, Vol. II: The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion (3rd ed., London: Macmillan and Company Limited, 1951), p. 367.

<sup>11</sup>Brébeuf, "Le Jeune's Relation," p. 235.

<sup>12</sup>Frazer, Taboo and the Perils of the Soul, p. 366.

<sup>13</sup>Louys André, "Relation of 1670-1671," The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents, ed. by Reuben Gold Thwaites, Vol. IV (Cleveland: The Burrows Brothers Company, 1899), p. 137.

<sup>14</sup>Francois du Peron, "Letter of Father Francois du Peron to Father Joseph Habert du Peron," The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents, ed. by Reuben Gold Thwaites, Vol. XV (Cleveland: The Burrows Brothers Company, 1898), p. 179.





<sup>15</sup>Horatio Hale (ed.), The Iroquois Book of Rites, Brinton's Library of Aboriginal American Literature, Part II (New York: A. M. S. Press, Inc., 1969), p. 72.

Brébeuf, "Le Jeune's Relation," pp. 279-311.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., pp. 289-291.

<sup>17</sup>James Gray, The Illinois (New York: Farrar and Rinehart, 1940), p. 14.

<sup>18</sup>Jerome Lalemant, "Relation of 1642," The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents, ed. by Reuben Gold Thwaites, Vol. XXIII (Cleveland: The Burrows Brothers Company, 1898), pp. 215-221.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 215.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 217.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 221.

<sup>23</sup>Brébeuf, "Le Jeune's Relation," pp. 229-231.

<sup>24</sup>Annemarie Anrod Shimony, "Conservatism Among the Iroquois at the Six Nations Reserve," Yale University Publications in Anthropology, No. 65 (New Haven: Department of Anthropology, Yale University, 1961), p. 235.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 285.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 237.

<sup>27</sup>David Boyle, "The Wake Game," Archaeological Report 1899 (Toronto: Warwick Brother's and Rutter, 1900), pp. 38-39.

<sup>28</sup>Shimony, "Conservatism Among the Iroquois," p. 238.

<sup>29</sup>Boyle, "The Wake Game," p. 38.

<sup>30</sup>Shimony, "Conservatism Among the Iroquois," p. 238.

<sup>31</sup>Harold Blau, "Notes on the Onondaga Bowl Game," Iroquois Culture, History and Prehistory, Proceedings of the 1965 Conference on Iroquois Research (Albany: The University of the State of New York, 1967), p. 35.

<sup>32</sup>William N. Fenton, Seneca Field Notes, 1933-38, cited in Voegelin, "Mortuary Customs of the Shawnee," p. 363.

Voegelin, "Mortuary Customs of the Shawnee," p. 361.



Regina Flannery, "An Analysis of Coastal Algonquian Culture," Anthropological Series, Catholic University of America, No. 7 (1939), p. 88.

<sup>33</sup>Shimony, "Conservatism Among the Iroquois," p. 237.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., p. 238.

<sup>35</sup>Frank Gouldsmith Speck and Alexander General, Midwinter Rites of the Cayuga Long House (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1949), p. 24.

<sup>36</sup>Shimony, "Conservatism Among the Iroquois," p. 239.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid.

William N. Fenton, "The Roll Call of the Iroquois Chiefs: A Study of a Mnemonic Cane from the Six Nations Reserve," Smithsonian Miscellaneous Collections, Vol. CXI, No. 15 (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1950), p. 35.

<sup>38</sup>Boyle, "The Wake Game," p. 39.

<sup>39</sup>Fenton, "The Roll Call of the Iroquois Chiefs," pp. 35-36.

<sup>40</sup>Shimony, "Conservatism Among the Iroquois," p. 238 and p. 240.

<sup>41</sup>Boyle, "The Wake Game," p. 38.

<sup>42</sup>Shimony, "Conservatism Among the Iroquois," p. 240.

<sup>43</sup>William M. Beauchamp, "Onondaga Notes," The Journal of American Folk-Lore, VIII, No. 30 (July-September, 1895), p. 212.

Flannery, "Coastal Algonquian Culture," p. 111.

<sup>44</sup>Speck and General, Midwinter Rites, p. 24.

Shimony, "Conservatism Among the Iroquois," p. 237.

Fenton, "The Roll Call of the Iroquois Chiefs," p. 35.

<sup>45</sup>Beauchamp, "Onondaga Notes," p. 212.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid.

<sup>47</sup>Boyle, "The Wake Game," p. 38.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid.

<sup>49</sup>Blau, "The Onondaga Bowl Game," p. 35.



<sup>50</sup>Shimony, "Conservatism Among the Iroquois," p. 239.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid.

Fenton, "The Roll Call of the Iroquois Chiefs," p. 35.

<sup>52</sup>Beauchamp, "Onondaga Notes," p. 212.

<sup>53</sup>Boyle, "The Wake Game," p. 38.

<sup>54</sup>Shimony, "Conservatism Among the Iroquois," p. 239.

<sup>55</sup>Boyle, "The Wake Game," p. 38.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid.

<sup>57</sup>Shimony, "Conservatism Among the Iroquois," p. 240.

<sup>58</sup>Fenton, "The Roll Call of the Iroquois Chiefs," p. 36.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid.

Shimony, "Conservatism Among the Iroquois," p. 240.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid.

<sup>61</sup>Boyle, "The Wake Game," p. 39.

<sup>62</sup>Shimony, "Conservatism Among the Iroquois," p. 241.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid., p. 240.

Boyle, "The Wake Game," p. 39.

<sup>64</sup>Blau, "The Onondaga Bowl Game," p. 37.

<sup>65</sup>Shimony, "Conservatism Among the Iroquois," p. 243.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid., p. 183 and p. 242.

<sup>67</sup>Voegelin, "Mortuary Customs of the Shawnee," p. 315 and p. 367.

<sup>68</sup>Halliday Jackson, Sketch of the Manners, Customs, Religion and Government of the Seneca Indians in 1800 (Philadelphia: M. T. C. Gould, 1830), p. 30.

<sup>69</sup>Shimony, "Conservatism Among the Iroquois," p. 237.

<sup>70</sup>Erminnie A. Smith, "Myths of the Iroquois," Second Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology to the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, 1880-1881 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1883), p. 116.



<sup>71</sup>H. C. Yarrow, "A Further Contribution to the Study of the Mortuary Customs of the North American Indians," First Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology to the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, 1879-1880 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1881), pp. 195-196.

William M. Beauchamp, "Iroquois Games," The Journal of American Folk-Lore, IX, No. 35 (October-December, 1896), pp. 274-275.

<sup>72</sup>Shimony, "Conservatism Among the Iroquois," p. 243 and p. 279.

Beauchamp, "Onondaga Notes," p. 212.

<sup>73</sup>Voegelin, "Mortuary Customs of the Shawnee," p. 359 and p. 361.

<sup>74</sup>Hale, The Iroquois Book of Rites, pp. 48-49.

<sup>75</sup>Ibid., pp. 59-61.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid., p. 149.

<sup>77</sup>Ibid., pp. 63-64.

<sup>78</sup>Lewis Henry Morgan, League of the Ho-De-No Sau-Nee or Iroquois, Vol. I (New Haven: Human Relations Area Files, 1954), p. 115.

<sup>79</sup>Peter Farb, Man's Rise to Civilization as Shown by the Indians of North America from Primitive Times to the Coming of the Industrial State (New York: E. P. Dutton and Company, Inc., 1938), pp. 98-99.

<sup>80</sup>Hale, The Iroquois Book of Rites, p. 120.

<sup>81</sup>Morgan, League of the Ho-De-No Sau-Nee or Iroquois, p. 299

<sup>82</sup>Ibid.

<sup>83</sup>Alice C. Fletcher and Francis La Flesche, "The Omaha Tribe," Twenty-Seventh Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology to the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, 1905-1906 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1911), p. 38.

<sup>84</sup>Ibid., pp. 366-369.

<sup>85</sup>Ibid., pp. 368-369.

<sup>86</sup>Ibid., p. 368

<sup>87</sup>Ibid., p. 369.

<sup>88</sup>Ibid.

<sup>89</sup>Ibid., p. 368.





<sup>90</sup>Ibid., p. 369.

<sup>91</sup>Voegelin, "Mortuary Customs of the Shawnee," p. 304.

<sup>92</sup>Ibid., p. 315.

<sup>93</sup>Fletcher and La Flesche, "The Omaha Tribe," p. 363.

<sup>94</sup>Frank Gouldsmith Speck, "Oklahoma Delaware Ceremonies, Feasts and Dances," Memoirs of the American Philosophical Society, Vol. VII (Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society, 1937), p. 118.

<sup>95</sup>Ibid., p. 101.

<sup>96</sup>Voegelin, "Mortuary Customs of the Shawnee," p. 361 and p. 363.

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<sup>97</sup>Speck, "Oklahoma Delaware Ceremonies," pp. 119-120.

<sup>98</sup>Ibid., p. 99.

<sup>99</sup>Richard C. Adams, Legends of the Delaware Indians and Picture Writing (Washington: [n.n.] , 1905), p. 47.

<sup>100</sup>Speck, "Oklahoma Delaware Ceremonies," p. 99.

<sup>101</sup>Ibid.

<sup>102</sup>Ibid.

<sup>103</sup>Shimony, "Conservatism Among the Iroquois," p. 239.

<sup>104</sup>Speck, "Oklahoma Delaware Ceremonies," p. 100.

<sup>105</sup>Ibid., p. 99.

<sup>106</sup>Ibid., p. 101.

<sup>107</sup>Ibid., p. 100.

<sup>108</sup>Adams, Legends of the Delaware, p. 48.

<sup>109</sup>Daniel G. Brinton, Essays of an Americanist (Philadelphia: Porter and Coates, 1890), p. 168.

<sup>110</sup>Speck, "Oklahoma Delaware Ceremonies," p. 100.



- 111 Harrington, "The Lenápe Culture," p. 215.
- 112 Speck, "Oklahoma Delaware Ceremonies," p. 101.
- 113 Ibid.
- 114 Ibid., p. 120.
- 115 Voegelin, "Mortuary Customs of the Shawnee," p. 315 and p. 367.
- 116 Speck, "Oklahoma Delaware Ceremonies," p. 118.
- 117 Voegelin, "Mortuary Customs of the Shawnee," p. 235.
- 118 Ibid., p. 274.
- 119 Ibid., p. 245.
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- 121 Ibid., p. 305.
- 122 Vernon Kinietz and Erminie Wheeler Voegelin (eds.), Shawnese Traditions, C. C. Trowbridge's Account (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1939), pp. 61-63.
- 123 Shimony, "Conservatism Among the Iroquois," p. 238.
- 124 Voegelin, "Mortuary Customs of the Shawnee," p. 362 and p. 367.
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- 126 Ibid., p. 295.
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- 129 Fletcher and La Flesche, "The Omaha Tribe," p. 369.
- 130 Voegelin, "Mortuary Customs of the Shawnee," p. 275.
- 131 Ibid., p. 297.
- 132 Ibid., p. 265.
- 133 Ibid., p. 283.
- 134 Ibid., p. 315.
- 135 Ibid., p. 304.



<sup>136</sup>Ibid., p. 367.

<sup>137</sup>Henry S. Halbert cited in John R. Swanton, "Source Material for the Social and Ceremonial Life of the Choctaw Indians," Bureau of American Ethnology, Bulletin No. 103 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1931), p. 192.

<sup>138</sup>Voegelin, "Mortuary Customs of the Shawnee," p. 361.

<sup>139</sup>William Edward Myer, "Two Prehistoric Villages in Middle Tennessee," Forty-First Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology to the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, 1919-1924 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1928), pp. 247-248 and Plate 137(b).

<sup>140</sup>Ibid., p. 604.

<sup>141</sup>Voegelin, "Mortuary Customs of the Shawnee," p. 313 and p. 348.



### CHAPTER III

#### GAMES POSSESSING CLIMATIC OVERTONES

The Indians faced many hardships in the course of their day to day living. Some, such as sickness and war, could, to a limited extent, be contained or avoided. Adverse weather conditions, however, were beyond their direct control. In an aboriginal setting, the very survival of an agrarian group was, to a large extent, directly related to the vagaries of the weather. During the summer, frosts and periods of excessive heat or drought always posed a threat to their crops, the products of which, even when successful, were barely sufficient to sustain a community through the ensuing harsh winter months. Blizzards not only made living unpleasant but, particularly among the more northern tribes, effectively prevented them from foraging for the supplies necessary to supplement their ever meager and rapidly dwindling food reserves.

While it is obvious that some individuals, notably the shamans, possessed a certain level of meteorological understanding, the large majority attributed the behaviour of the elements to the decrees of specific entities within their respective pantheons. It is, therefore, understandable that as the Indian possessed no direct means of climatic control, he would endeavour to obtain his objectives indirectly by appealing to, and appeasing these metaphysical beings. This resulted in a complex of rituals revolving around elements of the weather and celestial bodies.

In most cases, the entities involved were believed to be, like





their worshippers, passionately fond of games. Indeed, some of them were thought to have acquired their eminent position as a result of, or during the course of a game. A Caddoan myth serves to illustrate the latter.<sup>1</sup> These people tell of two brothers who, after constructing several arrows and a small elm-bark wheel, began to play the hoop and pole game. After several days of play, the younger brother failed to hit the wheel with his missile, whereupon it continued to roll beyond the designated fifty yard area. After a series of hair-raising adventures, the brothers succeeded in spearing the wheel and ultimately ascended to the sky-world as the spirits, Thunder and Lightning.

As associations of this nature are by no means rare within Indian mythology, it is not surprising to find that various play forms had climatic overtones and frequently served as the principle rite in certain ceremonies.

#### The Huron

Only one instance of a game being used to influence the weather has been recorded among the peoples of Huronia. In this case, lacrosse was played on the advice of a shaman, in an attempt to avert adverse weather conditions. Le Mercier states that during May of 1637, the inhabitants of several villages ". . . tired themselves to death . . ."<sup>2</sup> on the playing field, in the belief that ". . . the weather depended only upon a game of crosse. . . ."<sup>3</sup> Like many of the games employed for mortuary and medicinal purposes, the spirit in which this game was contested was probably of greater importance, in terms of the ritual, than was the actual outcome.

Although the temperature dropped and six inches of snow fell two or three days following this particular contest, the natives remained firm



in their conviction that lacrosse was an effective agent of climatic control. This faith indicates that the game had undoubtedly been used for similar purposes in the past and would be so employed again when the need arose. While the shaman ". . . lost a little of his repute on this occasion,"<sup>4</sup> native belief in the ritual points to a considerable degree of past success on the part of the Huron medicine-men in predicting short-range weather conditions.

### The Iroquois

Like the Huron, member tribes of the Six Nations also used lacrosse as a means of influencing the elements; however, unlike their northern relatives, there is no evidence of them employing it during the winter months to ward off inclement weather. Rather, they played the game as part of their Thunder Ceremony in order to bring about climatic conditions favourable to the growth of their crops. It is, of course, highly conceivable that the Hurons also employed the game for this purpose.

A Thunder Ceremony was scheduled by the majority of Iroquoian tribes whenever precipitation was required.<sup>5</sup> The most favourable condition for staging the ceremony occurred when the sound of thunder could be heard in the west.<sup>6</sup> There is some disagreement concerning the occasions on which the Cayuga ceremony was held. One source<sup>7</sup> contends that the ritual was only conducted over a one-day period in midsummer, usually August, while Eyman<sup>8</sup> maintains that it was held on two separate occasions--once in the spring and again in the summer. Both agree, however, that drought conditions prompted the ceremony. It seems probable that, like the Seneca,<sup>9</sup> the Thunder Ceremony was only staged in times of need and rarely more than once



a year.

The ceremony was scheduled and conducted by the men to implore the Thunderers--seven old men with vast supernatural powers--to bring rain, to control the winds and to continue their warfare against pestilential creatures, both natural and supernatural.<sup>10</sup>

The Cayuga referred to the Seven Thunderers\* as their "Grand-fathers" and viewed them as benevolent agents of the Great Spirit. It was believed that in addition to protecting mankind from evil, they were obligated to use the winds and rain to cleanse the earth. For these services, thanksgiving prayers were offered during the Midwinter Ceremony.<sup>11</sup> Unlike the Midwinter Ceremony, however, the Thunder Ritual was addressed specifically to the Seven Thunderers.

The ceremony consisted of a tobacco invocation, a game of lacrosse, and a war dance.<sup>12</sup> As ". . . lacrosse is the game which supernaturals play in the thunderhead, the lightning bolt their ball,"<sup>13</sup> the game was considered the principle rite of the Thunder Ceremony. The speaker appointed to direct the proceedings began by offering prayers and tobacco to the Great Spirit and to the Seven Thunderers. The tobacco was cast into a fire burning outside the longhouse and was believed to have been carried to the Thunderers by means of the smoke.<sup>14</sup>

The speaker next explained the occasion and the purpose of the game to the players and instructed them ". . . to be in good spirits while . . .

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\*A myth relates how the six brothers who resided in the sky were eventually joined by an earthling. Employing supernatural powers, this being was able to reach the sky-world, and, following a change of form, join the brothers in serving mankind and the Great Spirit. To the one from the earth was attributed the thunder that ". . . sounds like two sticks striking together."<sup>15</sup>



playing,"<sup>16</sup> to play fairly and avoid causing injury. Naturally malicious sentiments were considered out of place in a game contested for the supernatural.

The players, who had undergone a period of fasting prior to the contest,<sup>17</sup> were administered an emetic or ". . . medicine 'to clean them out,'"<sup>18</sup> just before taking the field. The ". . . purging and treatment with herbal medicines"<sup>19</sup> mentioned by Eyman, seems to suggest a series of earlier purification rites in addition to the pre-game emetic. Practices such as these were believed to "purify" the individual and accompanied most of the rituals directed towards the more prominent beings in their pantheon.

The game was contested by seven old men and a like number of young men who were selected from opposing moieties.\* "Thus the game," writes Eyman, "is thought of as being played between fathers and sons."<sup>20</sup> The contest was characterised by few rules, little violence and considerable emphasis on skill and speed.\*\* Although seven goals were required to win, the outcome was of no significance, at least in terms of the ritual. The ceremonial importance of the game lay in its symbolic representation of the ". . . conflict between life and death, good and evil, hope and despair," as well as the eternal ". . . warfare between the thunderers and their . . . enemies, the under-earth deities."<sup>21</sup> That these dichotomies were reflected in the teams is apparent from Eyman's observation that ". . . seven

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\*The moiety division is only occasionally observed today.<sup>22</sup>

\*\*It should be noted that only some of the Iroquoian peoples, namely the Seneca and Cayuga, have maintained the original form of the game and its old ceremonial associations. Others, like the Mohawk, while they continue to play the old-style game, do so only as a pastime.<sup>23</sup>





players . . . personify the seven thunder gods"<sup>24</sup>--and presumably "life," "good" and "hope." Unfortunately she neglects to designate the seven in question, although on the basis of other Iroquoian ceremonial games, it seems likely that the adopted roles were alternated between the teams from rite to rite.

In another sense, the outcome was important, for it is known that gambling was frequently associated with the game.<sup>25</sup> Certainly those natives with material items at stake must have displayed more than a passing interest in the result. Although betting was not considered a part of the rite, it ". . . was never reprobated by their religious teachers, but on the contrary rather encouraged. . . ." <sup>26</sup> Thus it was not viewed as sacrilegious and hence did not interfere with the purpose of the ceremony.

It is of interest to note that the number "seven," a number sacred to the Iroquois and already mentioned in relation to the number of players on each team and the number of goals required to conclude the game, occurs again in conjunction with the playing field. The field itself varied from one-eighth to one-quarter of a mile in length and possessed no side boundaries. At each end of the playing area, two posts were set into the ground, seven paces apart.<sup>27</sup> These posts were said to "reach the sky."<sup>28</sup> The distance between the posts and the concept of their height symbolised respectively, the seven deities to whom the game was dedicated, and a physical link between them and those involved in the ritual.

Following the game, the players entered the longhouse singing and dancing, to be joined by any male spectator who so desired. The ceremony was concluded inside with additional dancing, prayers of thanksgiving<sup>29</sup>





FIGURE I

"DOG HEAD" TIP OF A CAYUGA CEREMONIAL LACROSSE STICK<sup>30</sup>

and the distribution of tobacco and corn mush\* to the players.

That the Iroquois obviously had faith in the ceremony's ability to bring about a desired weather change is apparent from the emphatic statement of a native informant: ". . . as soon as the lacrosse game is over, rain comes, even if there have been no previous signs of a rain-storm."<sup>31</sup>

There is evidence to suggest that among some of the Iroquoian peoples, lacrosse was also employed during the Thunder Ceremony as a remedy for certain ailments.<sup>32</sup> These medicinal contests, separate from, and following the main ceremonial game,<sup>33</sup> will be considered at a later point in the study.

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\*The corn mush appears to symbolise the seventh Thunderer,<sup>34</sup> who, in order to change his shape, was crushed by the other six Thunderers in a corn mortar. The Cayuga referred to the game, when played on this occasion, as "beating the mush."





FIGURE 2

CARVED HANDLE OF A CAYUGA CEREMONIAL LACROSSE STICK<sup>35</sup>





Figures 1 and 2 depict sections of a pre-1845 lacrosse stick belonging to a Cayuga ritual leader. This stick was employed during the Thunder Ceremony for both the climatic and medicinal games. Of the stick, Eyman states:

The tip of the crook is in the form of the head of a dog, with the outermost string of the web coming out of a hole at the center of his mouth [Figure 1]. The animal head probably had symbolic and magical meaning--the stick in pursuit of the ball like a coursing hound. At the butt end of the handle [Figure 2], a human hand grasps a ball, perhaps with multiple significance. The ball may not be touched with the hand, but only with the crosse; possibly the crosse is here represented holding the ball as securely as though in the hand. The ball-in-hand was also a favorite motif for the ball-headed war club of ancient times, and this design may refer to the ritualized warfare acted out in the game. Two clasped hands are carved into the grip; these probably symbolize the friendly nature of the ball-play conflict, in contrast to the game's underlying allegorical warfare.<sup>36</sup>

One other ceremony deserves consideration at this point. This ceremony, believed to be extremely ancient, was dedicated to the two major celestial bodies--the moon and the sun.\* In essence, it served as an occasion on which the people were able to express gratitude for the warmth emanating from the sun and, at the same time, request favourable growing conditions and fine weather for their crops. As such, it was more closely related to certain supplicatory/thanksgiving rites than it was to weather control and will be discussed in greater depth at a later stage.

What is of interest here, however, is that while certain tribes, such as the Cayuga<sup>37</sup> and the Onondaga<sup>38</sup> scheduled and celebrated the ceremony by itself, usually in the spring, others had absorbed elements of the ritual into their Thunder Ceremony.<sup>39</sup> One such group was the Seneca, who, during times of drought, conducted a rite in honour of the Sun and the Seven

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\* In point of fact, the Moon Ceremony and the Sun Ceremony were two separate and distinct rituals; however, as their aims were similar, most Iroquoian tribes conducted them in conjunction with each other.





Thunderers.<sup>40</sup>

This ceremony commenced with a tobacco invocation to the sun and a plea from the shaman requesting "our old brother, the Sun . . ." <sup>41</sup> not to burn the crops. These preliminaries were followed by a game of hoop and pole. <sup>42</sup> The game was contested by two teams consisting of players from opposing moieties. Fenton, <sup>43</sup> without elaborating, states that one team represented the sun and the other, a shaman. It is more likely, however, that as the sun and the moon were believed to compete against each other in the game, and as the moon was considered, in part, responsible for the success of the crops, the teams probably represented these two entities. Thus, on this occasion, the game of hoop and pole may be viewed as a symbolic contest between the two. As the moon and sun ". . . derived pleasure from watching it," <sup>44</sup> the game was played in their honour and constituted part of the overall appeal for more favourable weather conditions. <sup>45</sup>

Although a description of the game, as it was played in conjunction with this ritual is unavailable, it is known that the "Sun" was permitted to roll the hoop first--a roll that had to travel towards the west. \*

If the symbolic association is correct, then it is understandable why victory was considered unimportant, <sup>46</sup> for defeat of the "Moon" by the "Sun," or visa versa, could conceivably undermine the purpose of the ritual. \*\*

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\* An east-west orientation was common to most activities in which the sun was involved.

\*\* An informant of Fenton states that the origin of the hoop and pole game in the Seneca Thunder Rite can be found in the following legend: "The Stone-coats [mythical stone giants] who were coming to attack the people's village frequently came upon huge javelins pinning enormous rings to the earth, and were frightened away, thinking the people proportionately large." <sup>47</sup> Assuming the legend to be complete, his explanation must be considered dubious, unless the nature of the ritual and its supernatural associations have changed considerably. The legend appears to be related more to the origin of the game than it does to the Thunder Ceremony.



Following the contest, a second tobacco invocation was made, this time to the Thunderers.<sup>48</sup> The ceremony concluded indoors with dancing and a series of individual supplications directed towards the Thunderers and the Sun.

One important element appears to be absent from the Seneca Thunder Rite, as it is related by Fenton;<sup>49</sup> that element being a rite to produce rain--unless, of course, the post-game invocation and prayers were considered sufficient. Shimony,<sup>50</sup> however, appears to supply the answer when she notes that the Seneca, like the other Iroquoian tribes, also played lacrosse as part of this ritual. Unfortunately, she does not elaborate, nor does she mention the game of hoop and pole. It is questionable, therefore, whether both lacrosse and hoop and pole were contested as part of the one ceremony or in fact constituted the major rites of two separate, but related, ceremonies.

### The Quapaw

The Quapaw were shattered physically and socially by European intruders between the Sixteenth and Nineteenth Centuries.<sup>51</sup> Knowledge of their culture has therefore been derived primarily from the Omaha, and to a lesser extent, from the Ponca, Osage and Kansa. These peoples were once of the same tribe and exhibited, long after separation, remarkably similar traditions, organisational patterns and religious rites.<sup>52</sup> There is a danger, of course, in assuming that the Quapaw played and used certain games in the same way as their kindred tribes, however, a dearth of material forces relationships to be drawn from elsewhere.

It is known that both the Omaha and Quapaw were split into two major



tribal divisions and embodied the same concepts regarding this separation. Among the Omaha, one division--"the Earth people"--was responsible for the physical welfare of the tribe, while the responsibilities for the other division--"the Sky people"--lay primarily with the supernatural welfare of the populace.<sup>53</sup> Cooperation between the two groups was thus believed to be essential if the Omaha were to survive physically and spiritually.

One of these cooperative ventures revolved around a game somewhat resembling shinny.<sup>54</sup> Although no longer employed in a ceremonial fashion, the game was once contested between two teams of young men chosen respectively from "the Earth people" and "the Sky people." As in the Seneca hoop and pole game,<sup>\*</sup> the players were considered to represent the principle entities involved in the ritual--in this case, the earth and the sky.<sup>55</sup>

The contest was formally opened by a member of the Ko<sup>n</sup>'ce or Wind gens--a subdivision of "the Earth people."<sup>56</sup> Even when played socially, the honour of commencing the game was bestowed on any one of these people present.<sup>57</sup> In the ritualistic version of the game, a circle-enclosed-cross was scratched in centre-field, as illustrated in Figure 3. The ball, having been placed in the centre, ". . . was first rolled towards the north along the line drawn to the edge of the circle, and then back on the same line to the centre."<sup>58</sup> As the broken line in Figure 3 indicates, this procedure was repeated along the eastern arm of the cross, then along the southern arm and finally along the western arm, until the ball again rested in the centre of the circle. The individual entrusted with this task then tossed the ball into the air and struck it, to begin the more vigorous part of the

<sup>\*</sup>If, as Fenton<sup>59</sup> suggests, the Seneca game was played between representatives of the sun and a shaman, then the earth/sky dichotomy existed here also.



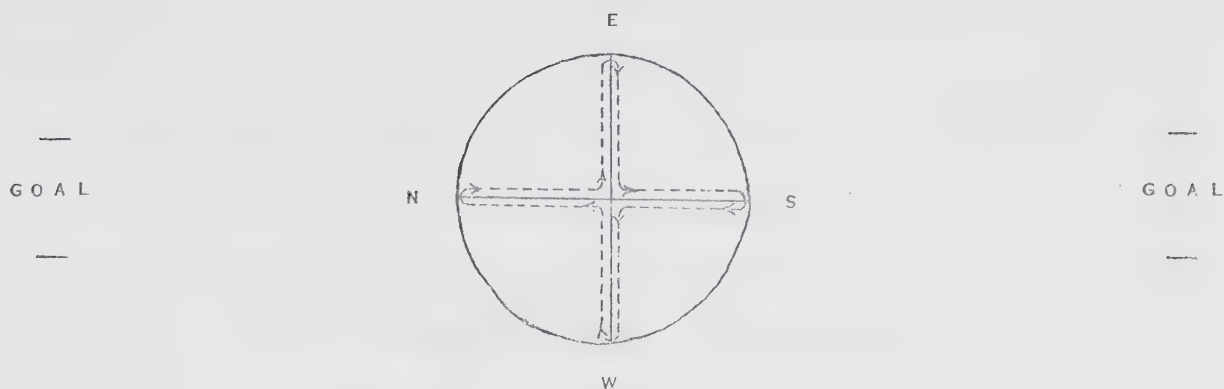


FIGURE 3

OMAHA CEREMONIAL SHINNY FIELD<sup>60</sup>rite.<sup>61</sup>

The game was said to have had cosmic significance in reference to the winds and the earth,<sup>62</sup> ". . . the initial movements of the ball referred to the winds, the bringers of life."<sup>63</sup> Whether the ritual was an attempt to promote rain is unclear, although the relationship between wind and rain was an extremely close one within the cosmological framework of many Eastern Woodland tribes. The Thunderers of the Iroquois, for example, were believed to control both these elements. The north-south orientation of the field seems to indicate that the sun did not occupy a significant place in the rite. In any event, there is little doubt that the ceremony was used as an attempt to influence the weather.

Shinny was played on social occasions, although only by the males--men and boys competing separately. The ritualistic version was exclusively





an adult-male game. Although Fletcher and La Flesche<sup>64</sup> state that large wagers were common when the men played, they do not indicate whether this was the case on all occasions. If gambling were associated with the ceremonial game, then there may have been considerable emphasis on victory. It is more likely, however, that in the same way as the Iroquois were able to separate the materialistic and spiritualistic aspects of their ceremonial lacrosse matches, so too were they separated in this game. On the basis of the tribes previously discussed, it seems probable that, in terms of the ritual, these people also placed greater emphasis on the spirit in which shinny was contested, than they did on the eventual outcome.

Two other youthful pastimes bear brief mention in conclusion. It has been observed that the boys played with whip-tops only during the winter months.<sup>65</sup> The climatic association is interesting, although whether it resulted from seasonal taboos, as was the case with the ring and pin, and stick games of the Delaware, or the simple fact that ice served as an ideal base upon which to spin these toys, is questionable.

The second activity is, in many ways, remarkably similar to contemporary Hallowe'en practices. Masked boys circulated throughout the community issuing a "trick or treat" ultimatum to certain elders. Although Fletcher and La Flesche<sup>66</sup> refer to this as a "sport," it seems to be ritualistic in character, particularly as the practice only occurred "in the spring, after the thunder had sounded. . . ." <sup>67</sup> The fact, too, that lightning and thunder were symbolised both in the apparel and behaviour of the youngsters, seems to support this. Whatever ceremonial connections there may have been are lost, however, the amusement does appear to have climatic overtones.



The Delaware

On the basis of existing evidence, only two Delaware games had a climatic association. One of these, referred to as "Scattering Straws,"<sup>68</sup> was a pastime that closely resembled the European game of jack-straws. A player dropped some sixty-five grass-straws onto a blanket and using a hooked quill, attempted to remove as many as possible from the cluster without disturbing the others. Should the remaining straws move during this time, the bundle was passed to the next contestant, where the procedure was repeated. Each separated straw contributed, according to its individual value, to the contestant's point-total. The game was terminated when one of the players had achieved the total previously agreed upon.<sup>69</sup> The straw game, played by men and women, either together or separately, usually involved gambling.<sup>70</sup>

Like this game, the game of ring and pin was also an adult indoor gambling game.<sup>71</sup> The principle item employed consisted of a number of hollow animal bones--often the phalanges of a deer--which were attached by a piece of string to a sharpened stick or bone. The object of the game was to swing the bones in the air and impale as many as possible on the stick. Points were awarded according to the number caught, each player continuing until three complete misses were recorded. As in the game of straws, the contest concluded when a predetermined total had been reached by one of the competitors.<sup>72</sup>

The interesting thing about these two games is that both could only be played during the winter months and participation in them was restricted to those individuals who had been born during that season.<sup>73</sup> It was commonly thought that to breach these conditions ". . . would bring on bad luck"<sup>74</sup>



--assumedly in the form of sickness. The climatic association, however, went further than this, as the Delaware believed that ". . . cold stormy weather . . ." <sup>75</sup> or blizzard conditions would follow the playing of each game.

Thus, the games of the Delaware differed in several major respects from those of the other tribes discussed in this chapter. In the first place, the Huron, Iroquois and Quapaw employed vigorous team games in a ceremonial setting, as devices to influence or control the weather.\* The Delaware games, on the other hand, individualistic and sedentary in nature, do not appear, at the time of their recording, to have been conducted as part of a standard ritual, nor did they serve as mechanisms of control.\*\* Further, while the games of the other tribes were used to produce positive results by averting inclement weather and/or by promoting favourable climatic conditions, the Delaware believed that the playing of certain games would inevitably result in adverse weather.

It is of interest to note that, despite this belief, these games continued to be played. The question as to why the Delaware participated in activities that were believed to create unpleasant conditions is perplexing. A possible solution is that the games, as Speck <sup>76</sup> relates them, are vestiges of an earlier ritual conducted in honour of those thought to control the elements. The resultant storms may then have been regarded as the means by which these entities acknowledged the ceremony. If so, the ensuing

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\* An exception here was the whip-top contests of the Quapaw. It is possible that beliefs and taboos, similar to those held by the Delaware, may also have been associated with this activity.

\*\* It should be noted, however, that in accordance with their belief, some measure of weather control could have been achieved by simply not playing the straw game or the ring and pin game.



bad weather would have been viewed more as a spiritual blessing than as an undesirable event.

Like the two games discussed, certain taboos were also associated with the construction of corn-husk dolls. While these dolls were not playthings, but featured prominently in certain of their rituals, it is worthy to note that only persons born in the summer could construct them in the likeness of a human figure.<sup>77</sup> Those born during the winter months were only permitted to make dolls in the image of the emblem of their ceremonial group--viz. animal, bird or reptile. To do so, however, was to court the anger of the "Winter Spirit"<sup>78</sup> and his resultant wrath in the form of cold weather. Although the possibility of unpleasant weather was associated with both the games mentioned and the creation of dolls, only in conjunction with the latter was it believed to result from a taboo violation.

### Summary

The survival of any agrarian-based culture is largely dependent upon the whims of the elements. This was certainly the case with the basically sedentary Indian cultures of eastern North America who relied solely on their summer harvest and the available local game to tide them over the winter months. As extended periods of heat and drought, snap frosts, violent storms and the like, could rapidly decimate the economic base of a tribe, it is little wonder that the natives did all in their power to prevent such disasters.

Knowing the elements to be beyond the control of mere mortals, the Indian sought to exert some degree of influence through a variety of supernaturally directed rituals. Games frequently served as the principal rites in these ceremonies. Some, such as the bowl game, were employed in





conjunction with standardised annual festivals.<sup>79</sup> While possessing climatic overtones, they were, however, more in the nature of thanksgiving rites than agents of change. Any effects stemming from these rituals were of the long-term variety.

On the other hand, the games discussed in this chapter, when contested under certain conditions, were all believed capable of promoting rapid environmental change. Thus, such activities as hoop and pole, lacrosse and shinny were played on a needs basis in honour of the thunder, the lightning, the moon, the sun and/or the wind, on the assumption that positive weather changes would result. Failure of these changes to materialise was attributed to incorrect ritualistic procedure and could be rectified by conducting the ceremony again. Other activities, such as the ring and pin and straw games of the Delaware, and possibly the whip-top contests of the Quapaw, were associated with negative weather conditions. More specifically, these six games were believed:

1. to promote rain
2. to temper the winds
3. to avert inclement weather, or
4. to result in inclement weather

It is interesting to note that vigorous, all-male, team games were necessary to bring about a favourable weather change, while adverse conditions could be brought on by semi-sedentary, mixed, individualistic games. Although gambling appears to have been common during most of these contests, it, like victory or defeat, was not believed to be a factor capable of influencing the game-weather relationship. Native faith in this cause-effect relationship suggests a considerable degree of meteorological knowledge and



TABLE VII  
EASTERN CULTURE AREA GAMES POSSESSING CLIMATIC OVERTONES

Tribe	Game	Contestants	Season Played	Spirit(s) Involved	Purpose or Result of Contest	Remarks
Huron	Lacrosse	Men v men? (Intervillage)	Winter	?	To avert blizzards	
Iroquois	1. Lacrosse	1. Men v men (Intermoiety)	1. Summer -drought	1. Thunderers, Great Spirit	1a. To promote rain b. To control winds	1. Gambling, Pre-game preparation
	2. Hoop and Pole	2. Men v men (Intermoiety)	2. Summer -drought and extreme temperatures	2. Sun, Moon, Thunderers	2a. To promote cooler weather b. To promote rain?	
Quapaw	1. Shinny	1. Men v men (Intermoiety)	1. Summer?	1. Winds	1a. To control winds b. To promote rain? 2. ?	1. Gambling?
	2. Whip-tops	2. Boys v boys	2. Winter	2. ?		
Caddo	Hoop and Pole	Men v men	Summer?	Thunder and Lightning	?	
Delaware	1. Straw Game	1. Men and women	1. Winter	1. Winter Spirit	1. Blizzards would result	1. Gambling
	2. Ring and Pin Game	2. Men and women	2. Winter	2. Winter Spirit	2. Blizzards would result	2. Gambling



predictive skill on the part of the shamans--knowledge that was essential if the expected change was to eventuate and the shamans retain their authority and respect within the community.



## FOOTNOTES--CHAPTER III

<sup>1</sup>George A. Dorsey, Traditions of the Caddo (Washington: Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1905), pp. 31-36.

<sup>2</sup>Francois Joseph Le Mercier, "Le Jeune's Relation, 1637," The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents, ed. by Reuben Gold Thwaites, Vol. XIV (Cleveland: The Burrows Brothers Company, 1898), p. 47.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Annemarie Anrod Shimony, "Conservatism Among the Iroquois at the Six Nations Reserve," Yale University Publications in Anthropology, No. 65 (New Haven: Department of Anthropology, Yale University, 1961), p. 163.

<sup>6</sup>Elisabeth Tooker, The Iroquois Ceremonial of Midwinter (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1970), p. 34.

<sup>7</sup>Frank Gouldsmith Speck and Alexander General, Midwinter Rites of the Cayuga Long House (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1949), p. 36 and p. 117.

<sup>8</sup>Frances Eyman, "Lacrosse and the Cayuga Thunder Rite," Expedition, VI, No. 4 (Summer, 1964), p. 18.

<sup>9</sup>William N. Fenton, "An Outline of Seneca Ceremonies at Cold Spring Longhouse," Yale University Publications in Anthropology, No. 9 (New Haven: Department of Anthropology, Yale University, 1936), p. 6.

<sup>10</sup>Shimony, "Conservatism Among the Iroquois," p. 163.

Speck and General, Midwinter Rites, p. 36.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 117.

<sup>12</sup>Tooker, The Iroquois Ceremonial, p. 34.

<sup>13</sup>Eyman, "The Cayuga Thunder Rite," p. 19.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 18.

Speck and General, Midwinter Rites, p. 118.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 117.





- <sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 118.
- <sup>17</sup>Eyman, "The Cayuga Thunder Rite," p. 18.
- <sup>18</sup>Speck and General, Midwinter Rites, p. 118.
- <sup>19</sup>Eyman, "The Cayuga Thunder Rite," p. 18.
- <sup>20</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>21</sup>Speck and General, Midwinter Rites, p. 117.
- <sup>22</sup>Eyman, "The Cayuga Thunder Rite," p. 15.
- <sup>23</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 18.
- <sup>25</sup>Speck and General, Midwinter Rites, p. 118.
- <sup>26</sup>Lewis Henry Morgan, League of the Ho-De-No Sau-Nee or Iroquois, Vol. I (New Haven: Human Relations Area Files, 1954), pp. 281-282.
- <sup>27</sup>Eyman, "The Cayuga Thunder Rite," p. 18.
- <sup>28</sup>Speck and General, Midwinter Rites, p. 118.
- <sup>29</sup>Ibid.  
Eyman, "The Cayuga Thunder Rite," p. 18.
- <sup>30</sup>Ibid., p. 16.
- <sup>31</sup>Shimony, "Conservatism Among the Iroquois," p. 164.
- <sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 163 and p. 278.
- <sup>33</sup>Ibid., p. 164.
- <sup>34</sup>Speck and General, Midwinter Rites, p. 117.
- <sup>35</sup>Eyman, "The Cayuga Thunder Rite," p. 17.
- <sup>36</sup>Ibid., p. 16.
- <sup>37</sup>Speck and General, Midwinter Rites, p. 36.
- <sup>38</sup>Shimony, "Conservatism Among the Iroquois," p. 157.
- <sup>39</sup>Tooker, The Iroquois Ceremonial, p. 34.



<sup>40</sup>Fenton, "An Outline of Seneca Ceremonies," p. 6.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>42</sup>Tooker, The Iroquois Ceremonial, p. 34.

<sup>43</sup>Fenton, "An Outline of Seneca Ceremonies," p. 8.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>45</sup>Tooker, The Iroquois Ceremonial, p. 34.

<sup>46</sup>Fenton, "An Outline of Seneca Ceremonies," p. 9.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid.

<sup>48</sup>Tooker, The Iroquois Ceremonial, p. 34.

<sup>49</sup>Fenton, "An Outline of Seneca Ceremonies," p. 6 and pp. 8-9.

<sup>50</sup>Shimony, "Conservatism Among the Iroquois," p. 163.

<sup>51</sup>Alice C. Fletcher and Francis La Flesche, "The Omaha Tribe," Twenty-Seventh Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology to the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, 1905-1906 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1911), p. 67.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., pp. 37-38.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid., p. 196.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid., p. 365.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., p. 198.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., p. 197.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., p. 366.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid., p. 197.

<sup>59</sup>Fenton, "An Outline of Seneca Ceremonies," p. 8.

<sup>60</sup>Fletcher and La Flesche, "The Omaha Tribe," Figure 45.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., p. 366.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid., p. 198.



<sup>64</sup>Ibid., p. 366.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid., p. 365.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid., p. 370.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid.

<sup>68</sup>Frank Gouldsmith Speck, "Oklahoma Delaware Ceremonies, Feasts and Dances," Memoirs of the American Philosophical Society, Vol. VII (Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society, 1927), p. 104.

<sup>69</sup>Ibid., pp. 104-104.

<sup>70</sup>Ibid., pp. 105-106.

<sup>71</sup>Daniel G. Brinton, Essays of An Americanist (Philadelphia: Porter and Coates, 1890), p. 186.

<sup>72</sup>Speck, "Oklahoma Delaware Ceremonies," p. 102.

<sup>73</sup>Ibid., p. 102 and p. 106.

Regina Flannery, "An Analysis of Coastal Algonquian Culture," Anthropological Series, The Catholic University of America, No. 7 (1939), p. 88.

<sup>74</sup>Speck, "Oklahoma Delaware Ceremonies," p. 106.

<sup>75</sup>Ibid., p. 102.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid., p. 101 and p. 104.

<sup>77</sup>Ibid., p. 103.

<sup>78</sup>Ibid.

<sup>79</sup>Harold Blau, "Notes of the Onondaga Bowl Game," Iroquois Culture, History and Prehistory, Proceedings of the 1965 Conference on Iroquois Research (Albany: The University of the State of New York, 1967), pp. 35-36.



## CHAPTER IV

### GAMES ASSOCIATED WITH MEDICINAL PRACTICES

The natives of the Eastern Culture Area, like many peoples throughout the ages, were vividly aware of the dangers inherent in unchecked illness. As a result, a variety of medicinal practices evolved from their attempts to alleviate personal suffering and curtail possible epidemics. As all remedies were believed to have metaphysical origins, the rites, whether preventive or curative, were divined and prescribed by the shaman in his role as middleman between the natural and the supernatural. The rites were then administered either by a group of specialists or persons best able to effect a cure, according to the decree of the spiritual entity in question.

Some practices, such as blood letting and the administration of herbal concoctions, are common to the medicinal history of many cultures, while others are unique to specific Eastern Woodland tribes. Contained among the latter, are certain game rites. Although the value of some of these rites may be subject to question in contemporary medical circles, it must be borne in mind that a firm belief in a cure may be as valuable as the cure itself. Native practitioners and their patients certainly placed considerable faith in these supernaturally prescribed curative rites.

#### The Huron

The Huron employed three games for medicinal purposes, ". . . namely, the games of crosse, dish, and straw,--the first two are, they say,





most healing."<sup>1</sup> As the Huron considered the straw game to be the least effective curative agent of the three, it was rarely used. As a result, it has not received the same amount of ethnographic attention as have the other two games.

When used for healing purposes, the games were either ordered by a shaman, or were requested by the patient on the basis of a personal dream.<sup>2</sup> Occasionally a contest was prescribed in response to a dream other than the patient's, for, as one sick native related: "It was not I who called . . . [the players]; my mother dreamed that I would recover if a solemn game was played. . . ."<sup>3</sup>

The role of the dream in the Huron culture cannot be underestimated. They believed that the dream resulted from contact with a supernatural being, who, appearing ". . . in the form of a crow or some other similar bird, . . . [or] in the form of a flame or a ghost . . ."<sup>4</sup> conversed with them during sleep. The power of this belief was such that dreams dictated their every action--their hunting and fishing, their war and trade, their remedies, their feasts and dances, and their games and songs.<sup>5</sup> "In a word, the dream does everything and is in truth the principal God of the Hurons."<sup>6</sup>

Not all dreams were taken seriously, however, particularly when the individual involved had a history of "untrue" dreams. There is evidence to suggest also that the dreams of a poor person were given little consideration.<sup>7</sup> All were evaluated, however, by the medicine men in order to verify their validity. Once this was established, the remedy best suited to the particular ailment was determined from the content of the dream and subsequently administered, even at the risk of opposing a tribal elder,<sup>8</sup> as the dream was ". . . understood for a command of some genius [spirit],"<sup>9</sup>



and hence had to be obeyed.

Two common non-herbal remedies took the form of lacrosse and the bowl game.<sup>10</sup> The bowl game is the most widely documented of the two, although whether it served as a cure for a greater number of ailments than did lacrosse, is questionable. It is possible that the bowl game was used as the major medicinal rite during the winter, to be replaced by lacrosse throughout the summer months. If this were the case, and the literature seems to support it, then it would appear that, unlike Iroquoian practices, the games prescribed were related more to the season than they were to the actual illness.

The bowl game was contested between villages.<sup>11</sup> Upon being informed of the need for a game, the elders ". . . immediately assemble the council, fix the time, and choose the village that they must invite for this purpose. . . ."<sup>12</sup> An envoy was then dispatched to the village selected, where the challenge was accepted and the arrangements finalised.

Both villages entered into a series of pre-game preparatory rites. Several nights were spent playing the bowl game in order to ascertain the most successful players<sup>13</sup> and, according to Brébeuf, to divine the outcome of the prospective intervillage contest. To determine the latter, the fruit-stone dice were placed indiscriminately into the bowl and covered. "That done, they sing; the song over, the dish is uncovered, and the plum-stones are found all white or all black."<sup>14</sup> Unfortunately, the author does not indicate whether black or white symbolised victory. Black, however, was commonly associated with death and defeat among many of the eastern tribes. Should this have been the case with the Huron, then the divinatory rite may have served a dual purpose--firstly, to determine the village's success in



the game, black signifying defeat, white victory; and secondly, to determine the medicinal outcome of the contest, white and black symbolising life and death respectively.

During these initial games, the contestants displayed their charms, and appealed to those supernatural beings with whom they believed the charms were linked. The players involved in the games slept in a common dwelling, fasted\* and abstained from sexual intercourse;<sup>15</sup> ". . . all this to have some favourable dream."<sup>16</sup> The dreams were related every morning, to determine which objects could best assist them during the forthcoming medicinal game. Small charms, suggested by the dreams, were collected, placed in pouches and carried with them. "If there be some old men whose presence is regarded as efficacious in augmenting the strength and virtue of their charms, they are not satisfied to take the charms to them, but sometimes even load these men upon the shoulders of the young men, to be carried to the place of assembly."<sup>17</sup> In addition, persons not immediately involved in these pre-game rites, who were known to possess potent charms and thus the support of powerful spirits, were requested to avail themselves during the upcoming contest.<sup>18</sup> This did not exclude the Jesuit missionaries, for ". . . inasmuch as we pass in the country for master sorcerers," writes Lalemant, "they do not fail to admonish us to begin our prayers, and to perform many ceremonies, in order to make them win."<sup>19</sup> The fact that the missionaries chose to ignore these overtures, created considerable resentment among the natives.<sup>20</sup>

The individual ultimately selected to represent the community was

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\*Fasting particularly, was believed to facilitate favourable visions or dreams.<sup>21</sup>



chosen, not only on the basis of his playing skill, but also because he had dreamt that he would win, and was believed to possess the necessary fetishes to accomplish this end. Certain other skills were obviously also an asset to such a person. One such native rubbed the fruit-stones with a special ointment before tossing them in the bowl--". . . some of the plum-stones disappear, and are found some time after in the dish with the others"<sup>22</sup>--assumedly in a winning combination. There is little doubt that this sleight of hand quickly gained him a reputation as an outstanding player. It should be pointed out that this particular native was the one responsible for depositing the stones in the bowl during the rite of divination discussed earlier.

The game was conducted either in the home of the patient<sup>23</sup> or in a cabin large enough to accommodate the spectators.<sup>24</sup> In the case of the latter, the onlookers sat on each side of the building upon wooden structures ". . . arranged as high as the roof. . . ." <sup>25</sup> The patient, carried to the cabin on a blanket, was followed by the player selected to represent the host village and be responsible for starting the game. This player entered the dwelling with his face and head covered<sup>26</sup> and took up his position, along with his assistants holding the charms, opposite the player and charmbearers representing the visiting community.<sup>27</sup>

As individual betting was heavy on both sides, the audience, when the game began, made every effort to influence the course of events by calling on their personal charms and associated spirits.<sup>28</sup>

. . . every one begins to pray or mutter, . . . with gestures . . . of the hands, eyes, and the whole face,--all to attract to himself good luck, and to exhort their demons to take courage and not let themselves be tormented.

Some are deputed to utter execrations and to make precisely contrary





gestures,--with the purpose of driving ill luck back to the other side, and of imparting fear to the demon of the opponents.<sup>29</sup>

Practices such as these, together with the elaborate pre-game preparations, indicate an intense desire to win. Just what place victory played in the purpose of the ritual is unclear, although it does not appear that either victory or defeat were directly related to the curative aspect of the game. Perhaps, like their lacrosse matches, the value of the game as a medicinal rite, lay in the manner in which it was contested--the more competitive, the more effective it was deemed to be.

The Huron obviously placed considerable faith in the bowl game in terms of its value as a medicinal agent,<sup>30</sup> for after ". . . the game ended, the patient returned the players a great many thanks for the cure, which . . . they had procured. . . ." <sup>31</sup> Nor was this faith confined to the natives. Le Mercier<sup>32</sup> relates the case of a Huron who, upon falling ill, requested the bowl game. Games were subsequently played for several consecutive days in his cabin. The perplexed missionary states that "this is one of the excellent remedies they have. At the end of seven or eight days . . . he had entirely recovered his health. . . ." <sup>33</sup> The fact that the individual involved was on the verge of conversion to the Christian faith must have been somewhat demoralising for the author.

Before moving to lacrosse, two other sources must be examined, as both pose rather interesting questions. Le Jeune witnessed ". . . a game or challenge between two nations . . . over the recovery of a poor patient." <sup>34</sup> Unfortunately, he does not describe the contest, but he does indicate that "the players and the betters went into his [the patient's] cabin at the sound of a drum and of the tortoise shell [rattle], which they accompanied with cries and shouts. . . ." <sup>35</sup> This sounds remarkably like the moccasin





FIGURE 4

#### HURON WOMEN ENGAGED IN A MEDICINAL DICE GAME<sup>36</sup>

game. However, there is no evidence to indicate that this activity was ever employed for medicinal purposes by the Huron. On the other hand, and contrary to Davis's claim,<sup>37</sup> chanting and music have not been verified in association with the curative bowl game. The actual game then remains an enigma.

Figure 4 depicts a group of Hurons involved in what appears to be a medicinal rite. If the sketch has not been marred by artistic licence, it reveals several previously undocumented facts. Firstly, the contestants are all women, secondly, the game is being played in the open air, and



thirdly, and of most importance, is the fact that this is not the bowl game per se, but rather a variation of it--a variation in which the fruit-stone dice were cast from the hand in lieu of a bowl. Although this particular game was popular among the Huron, it has never been recorded as a medicinal rite. However, this does not negate the possibility that it was used for such purposes, particularly when it is considered that the game was a common pastime of the women,<sup>38</sup>--women, who being members of a matrilineal society, enjoyed the same power and status as their menfolk--and is known to have been associated with Iroquoian medicinal practices.

Certain parallels exist between the activity, as portrayed in the sketch, and the bowl game, viz. a blanket upon which the dice were cast; the number of dice employed (six); and the associated fetishes and hand gestures designed to bring good luck. Unfortunately, La Potherie<sup>39</sup> does not refer to the drawing during the course of his narrative, thus the researcher is forced to assume that the sketch was indeed based on the game illustrated and not confused with the medicinal bowl game.

Like the bowl game, lacrosse was also employed for remedial purposes.<sup>40</sup> Brébeuf<sup>41</sup> relates how, on one occasion, this game was contested as a remedy to "cool," and assumedly cure, an individual dying of fever. However, fever was not the only illness that could be cured by lacrosse, for any native close to death, regardless of the affliction, could request a game. If the request were granted, ". . . no matter how little may be his credit, you will see then in a beautiful field, village contending against village, as to who will play crosse the better. . . ." <sup>42</sup>

In addition to lacrosse being prescribed as a remedy for individuals, it was similarly employed as a means to combat communal sickness, and to





curtail the spread of a contagious disease.<sup>43</sup> Once a shaman had requested a game for this purpose, "no more needs to be said, it is published immediately everywhere; and all the captains of each village give orders that all the young men do their duty in this respect, otherwise some great misfortune would befall the whole country."<sup>44</sup>

When used for remedial purposes, the game was played between neighbouring communities. There is evidence to suggest that a number of simultaneous, but separate, intervillage contests may have been conducted in response to a request of this nature.<sup>45</sup> Although participation varied somewhat, depending on the status of the individual concerned and the nature of the illness, community involvement was still high. This is understandable when it is considered that although the game was requested by a mortal, the Huron believed that he was merely echoing a supernatural decree.

It is known that items, such as beaver robes and porcelain collars, were usually wagered on the outcome of these contests.<sup>46</sup> This supports their contention that the medicinal value of the game lay more in the spirit in which it was contested--in this case, a highly competitive spirit--than it did in the actual outcome, for what better way to foster competition than by gambling on the result.

Although no evidence exists of lacrosse being used for medicinal purposes by the Neutrals, it is highly conceivable, considering their affiliation with the Huron. The game was, however, played as a remedy for sickness by the other members of the Huron Confederacy--the Tobacco Nation.<sup>47</sup> Little is known about the role of the game in their medicinal practices except that they, like the Huron, emphasised intense competition by permitting gambling to be associated with the contest, and attached no importance





to the ultimate outcome--at least in terms of the ritual. Orr,<sup>48</sup> after discussing the Tionontati, or Tobacco, indicates that prior to the game, players were subjected to a course of bathing, fasting and emetics, following which they painted and adorned their bodies in readiness for the contest. This seems to suggest an element of purification, with distinct metaphysical overtones. Unfortunately, it is not clear whether he is referring here specifically to the Tobacco medicinal game or speaking in general terms. Pre-game preparations of this type were common among the Iroquoian tribes whenever lacrosse was played for curative purposes. Similarly, certain rites, including fasting, accompanied the medicinal bowl game of the Huron. Thus it is feasible that practices of this nature were also associated with the lacrosse games of the Tobacco, when prescribed as a remedy for sickness.

The straw game was observed as a popular social game among the Huron men<sup>49</sup> and was reputed to have served as one of their remedial devices<sup>50</sup> Although no actual evidence exists as to its use in this capacity, certain practices bear a marked similarity to the medicinal bowl game. Perrot<sup>51</sup> for example, noted that the game was normally only played in the "Academy of the Savages"--the main communal structure in the village--while the contestants contorted their bodies and muttered incantations during the course of play.<sup>52</sup> It is possible that Marquette's obscure reference is to this activity. This missionary objected to a particular dance being used for medicinal purposes, whereupon "to satisfy . . . [the patient], the dance asked for was changed into a children's game. . . ." <sup>53</sup> It should be noted that while the game was designated as a child's game by the missionary, it was probably not considered as such by the Huron and Ottawa players involved in this particular contest.



There is some doubt, however, as to whether Marquette was referring to the straw game, for he later describes a "riddle guessing game" employed to assist a young native who had fallen ill.<sup>54</sup> This activity, although not widely reported as a remedial device among the Huron, was common in association with Iroquoian medicinal practices. Although discussed in more detail at a later point, it basically involved correctly guessing the contents of an individual's dream, whereupon the item in question or a replica of the object--lacrosse stick, snow-snake--was presented to the dreamer by the native making the correct guess.<sup>55</sup> It is possible then that the game substituted for the dance on this occasion may have been of this nature.

The highly ritualised aspects of the Huron games, hitherto described, seem to suggest that many of them may, at an earlier stage, have been contested for medicinal purposes as part of annual standardised festivals. This was certainly the case among the Iroquois, where a segment of a ceremony, for example the Midwinter Festival, was given over to activities of a remedial nature. In support of this contention is Beschefer's claim that "some persons . . . held games in honour of the Moon, for the recovery of a young man's health. . . ."<sup>56</sup> While not described, the games played on this occasion may have been held in conjunction with a Moon Ceremony. If this were the case, then the ritualised nature of the contests can be better understood, for, while the remedial aspect of the ceremony was considered subsidiary to its overall aim, it was still part of the festival and thus had to be conducted in such a fashion so as to ensure the ceremony's success.

In all likelihood then, Huron medicinal games were not only



TABLE VIII

## HURON MEDICINAL GAMES

Game	Function	Contestants	Remarks
Bowl game	Cure general sickness	Men v men (Intervillage)	a. Divination b. Gambling c. Pre-game preparations d. Aids to influence game
Dice game	Cure general sickness?	Women v women	a. Gambling? b. Aids to influence game
Dream guessing	a. Prevent illness b. Cure general sickness	Men and women	Prizes awarded
Lacrosse	a. Cure fever and serious illness b. Curtail epidemics	Men v men (Intervillage)	a. Gambling b. Pre-game preparations c. Aids to influence game?
Moccasin game?	?	Men and women?	
Straw game	Cure minor illness?	Men v men	a. Gambling? b. Aids to influence game



prescribed on a needs basis, but were also included in certain major ceremonies.

### The Iroquois

Dreams or visions played a major role in the Iroquoian culture, and had a decided influence on the medicinal practices of these peoples--practices that frequently included play activities. A Cayuga woman, for example, claimed that ". . . she had been promised good health in a dream if she would make plum-stone dice and play with them from time to time."<sup>57</sup> Similarly, other members of the Six Nations held ". . . games of lacrosse or Indian football at intervals in response to dreams, for the benefit of their health."<sup>58</sup>

The Iroquois, like the Huron, made extensive use of the dream medium to prescribe specific remedies, a practice given due consideration at a later point. The Iroquois, however, further believed that failure to acknowledge an activity suggested by a dream was to court misfortune, particularly in relation to their health. For this reason, "dream fulfilment" rituals<sup>59</sup> were included in the earlier portion of the Midwinter Festival.<sup>60</sup> This festival, held in late January or early February, was divided into two sections. The first part of the ceremony was primarily concerned with the curing and personal well-being of the participants, while the concluding portion revolved around supplication and thanksgiving rites directed towards the agricultural and cosmic hierarchy.<sup>61</sup> Thus, on this occasion, an individual who had dreamt of a specific game or dance, was given the opportunity to publicly disclose its nature and so avoid offending the





spirit from whence it originated.\*

The method of disclosing the contents frequently resulted from a "dream guessing"<sup>62</sup> competition--the person, successfully guessing, being required to construct a miniature replica of the dream's principal object.<sup>63</sup> This commonly took the form of a miniature snow-snake, lacrosse stick, tug-of-war stick,<sup>64</sup> or a bowl game artifact,<sup>65</sup> and was presented to the dreamer to serve as a protective charm during his lifetime.\*\*

Once the contents of the dream had been disclosed, either by the guessing contest or through a simple declaration on the part of the dreamer, it was normal for the activity in question to be performed. Thus, dream-fulfilment games, such as the bowl game,<sup>66</sup> occupied most of the mornings during the early stages of the Midwinter Festival. Held in the privacy of individual homes,<sup>67</sup> the bowl games were contested between a team of men and women, selected equally from each moiety,<sup>68</sup> who represented the longhouse and the occupants of the dwelling, regardless of their moiety affiliation. As requests for the bowl game were numerous,\*\*\* the troupe began its circuit from the longhouse and played a brief game in each dwelling before returning to the point of departure. Thus Seneca players, "before leaving the longhouse . . . [first] play [a bowl game] against the men and on returning

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\*This applied to all dreams that had occurred since the last Midwinter Ceremony. Even if the dream had been previously divined and a curative rite performed, the dream had to be renewed during the Midwinter Festival. As a result, the ritual may be more aptly referred to as one of "dream fulfilment and dream renewal."<sup>69</sup>

\*\*Miniatures of this nature, because of their potential danger when in the wrong hands, were buried with the dreamer.<sup>70</sup>

\*\*\*The bowl game was either requested simply as a rite in itself, or as one of the Four Sacred Rituals, in which case the Feather Dance, Skin Dance and Thanksgiving Prayer were also performed.



play against the women."<sup>71</sup> All those present at the longhouse were involved in the opening and concluding games.<sup>72</sup>

Gambling was associated with all dream-fulfilment bowl games,<sup>73</sup> both in the longhouse and in individual homes. Items to be wagered were collected prior to the games, divided into lots and distributed among the touring players. Individuals wishing to bet, either had their stakes matched by one of the troupe from the items previously collected, or engaged in side-betting. "The game[s] . . . [are] accompanied by much shouting and gesturing, all with the intent of driving luck away from one's opponents and to one's own side."<sup>74</sup>

Attempts to influence the outcome of the contest, the associated gambling, and ultimate victory or defeat, were totally irrelevant in relation to the game's raison d'être. The importance of these contests lay solely in the fact that the desires of certain spirits, expressed through the medium of a dream, had been met.

Obviously the bowl game was not the only contest employed in this capacity as the ritual revolved around both dream-fulfilment and dream renewal. In the case of the latter, an individual who had been cured by a dream-divined rite during the course of the year, re-established or renewed his association with the rite in question at this time to ensure continued good health. In so far as a variety of games was employed for remedial purposes, it is conceivable, as Tooker<sup>75</sup> infers, that some or all of them were also played in conjunction with the Midwinter dream-fulfilment ritual. The Seneca, for example, were reported to have engaged in snow-snake contests whenever they were not required in the longhouse.<sup>76</sup> Whether these games were of a dream renewal/fulfilment, medicinal or social nature is unknown.



It is, however, highly unlikely that they were social games, given the fact that they were conducted on the fourth day of the Seneca Midwinter Festival, during the period of that ceremony reserved for personal curing and well-being.<sup>77</sup>

Another aspect of the curing and personal well-being section of the Midwinter Ceremony must be mentioned at this point. This rite, also conducted during the early stages of the festival, was that known as "friendship renewal."<sup>78</sup> Ritual friendships were considered essential should a shaman interpret a dream to indicate that a certain illness could be cured or good health retained, through the establishment of such a relationship. Thus the Midwinter Ceremony served as the occasion during which friendships of this nature were either established or consolidated.

Except for the Onondaga,<sup>79</sup> member tribes of the Six Nations employed the bowl game as a friendship renewal rite.<sup>80</sup> This abbreviated version of the regular game, held in private quarters, or in the longhouse, was ". . . played between the men and women, bets being collected from all those . . . who wished to place such."<sup>81</sup> When utilised for this purpose, the bowl game was normally played in the evening. Fenton<sup>82</sup> states that such games as lacrosse, hoop and pole, snow-snake, and football were employed, either singly or in combination, for similar reasons by the Seneca.\*

As the format of some of these games varied slightly, they were highly feared by the community as containing an element of witchcraft, hence were not performed publicly during the Midwinter Festival.<sup>83</sup> The bowl game, using a variant set of counters and rules of scoring, was one of these. Of

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\*Team members were of the same sex. They either competed against a similarly composed team, or one made up of the opposite sex, depending on the nature of the friendship being consolidated.



this game, Shimony writes:

The bowl and dice and method of play, as well as the moiety division and pairing of bets, are as in the standard game, but scoring is managed by a male scorekeeper, who sticks the carved wooden pegs into two pots of soil. . . . The counters consist of the following: six pegs about 5 inches long, six shorter pegs, six animals--two eels and two different pairs of lizards--a man, a woman, a penis, and a log. . . . These are evenly divided among the players. If the . . . [player] is a woman, her moiety has the woman and a log, and if a man, his moiety has the man and penis. The [Wolf clan] . . . always draw the short pegs.<sup>84</sup>

Despite the believed occult association, the woman who sponsored this contest characterised it as a pure and legitimate means of establishing friendship. There is reason to believe that a form of football, in which a burning ball was kicked, was also employed in order to consolidate ritual friendships.<sup>85</sup> Like the variant bowl game, it too was held in private.\*

When employed in this capacity, the games themselves were not viewed as curative agents, but rather as mechanisms for establishing or solidifying ritual friendships. As these relationships, however, were considered as effective means of combating illness, the associated games therefore relate indirectly to Iroquoian medicinal practices.

As stated earlier, the Iroquois believed that visions, when interpreted correctly, were capable of providing the agent necessary to prevent or alleviate illness. Like the Huron, the rite ultimately chosen to combat a particular ailment was either divined by a shaman, or determined by the individual concerned, from a dream.<sup>86</sup> Unlike their cousins to the north, the Iroquois did not regard the rite per se as the sole agency of relief. Rather, it was employed in conjunction with herb medicines and was designed

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\*Both these games were also employed as medicinal rites, although never publicly.





to remove "spiritual obstacles" and thus permit the herbal agents to function effectively.<sup>87</sup>

The major responsibility for healing among the Iroquois lay with the Medicine Societies. These were numerous and differed in terms of membership, power and function. They can, however, be divided into two distinct categories--the restricted and the unrestricted societies. Membership in a restricted society was limited to those who had been cured by the rites of that body. In general, they were extremely formal and shrouded in secrecy. However, they are of little interest here in so far as they rarely used games for curative purposes.\* The unrestricted societies, on the other hand, were rather loosely-knit organisations to which anybody could belong.<sup>88</sup> These societies employed a variety of games and contests in the course of their medicinal practices.<sup>89</sup>

Remedial rites were either conducted on a needs basis, or as part of a standardised ceremony, such as the Midwinter Festival. Usually, one or two days were given over to the Medicine Societies during the first part of this festival\*\*--the rites commencing after the morning dream fulfilment rituals had been concluded.<sup>90</sup> At such time, specific remedies were requested of the Societies either on behalf of persons who were ill, or by those who had derived benefits from the rites on previous occasions, and who again desired them.<sup>91</sup> Normally they were performed in the longhouse, although if not completed at the end of the designated period, were continued

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\* It is interesting to note that members of the contemporary Onondaga False Face Society wear modern football helmets during the course of their Midwinter curative rites.<sup>92</sup>

\*\*The Cayuga, for example, reserved the third and fourth day of their eight-day Midwinter Festival for the rites of their Medicine Societies.<sup>93</sup>



in private dwellings.<sup>94</sup> Certain rites, because of their nature, obviously had to be conducted in the open.

Speck and General<sup>95</sup> provide a sample one-day programme of the curative rites performed at the 1936 Cayuga Midwinter Festival. Held for individuals, men, women and children alike, they consisted primarily of restricted society dances, however, on this occasion, at least two different bowl games were played in the longhouse and three separate games of football were contested outside in the snow, by members of the unrestricted societies.\* In addition to football and the bowl game, activities such as snow-snake, lacrosse, tug-of-war, dice, and hoop and pole<sup>96</sup> have also been noted in conjunction with the Midwinter remedial rituals.<sup>97</sup> These rites were performed by the non-restrictive societies and were addressed to the spirit forces of the earth.<sup>98</sup>

The use of snow-snake for curative purposes is believed to be of recent origin.<sup>99</sup> A legend relates how a native in time passed, successfully employed this game, on the advice of a shaman, to remove from his leg the poison and sores resulting from a snake-bite.<sup>100</sup> Although occasionally used for relief of general sickness,<sup>101</sup> the game served more specifically as a remedy for sore legs.<sup>102</sup>

Among the Cayuga, the rite was contested between two teams of two or three players, chosen on a moiety basis.\*\* The competitors first assembled with the game implements in the home of the patient, where a verbal and

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\*Football was not requested as a curative rite during the 1933 Cayuga Midwinter Festival.<sup>103</sup>

\*\*Teams were either composed of players selected from opposing moieties or, more commonly, made up of players from the opposite moiety to that of the patient.<sup>104</sup>





FIGURE 5

SENECA BONE DICE\* AND BOWL GAME ARTIFACTS<sup>105</sup>

tobacco invocation was offered to the "snake spirits."<sup>106</sup> It should be noted that the patient was required to provide the snow-snakes, although the players and spectators were expected to have some available perchance they were needed.<sup>107</sup> Following an address by the ritual leader, the game commenced. Shimony<sup>108</sup> reports that the first snake was thrown by the patient, whereafter he retired to the longhouse to join the other spectators.

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\* The inscribed markings on the dice have no significance to the Seneca and appear to have been copied from the Micmac and Penobscot dice.



If the patient were a male, he had to employ his own snow-snake for this throw. A female, on the other hand, needed only to procure a small charm replica of the first implement cast, to fulfil her ritual obligations.<sup>109</sup>

Although the sacred number of seven was required to win, "it makes no difference in the efficacy of the action as a cure which side wins."<sup>110</sup> Thus, as the outcome was not used for divinatory purposes, nor was gambling associated with the contest, the significance of the rite lay in the game itself, rather than in the result.<sup>111</sup> The victorious team was presented with a basket of cakes by the game's sponsor.<sup>112</sup> A person cured by this game automatically became a member of the society conducting the rite and was expected to request the ceremony annually to prevent the affliction from reoccurring.

Originally the game was played throughout the year<sup>113</sup>--on grass in the summer time and on snow in the winter--however, the contemporary Iroquois now only engage in this activity during the winter months. Hence the snow-snake rite is now normally affiliated with the Midwinter Festival.

The "kicking game,"<sup>114</sup> or football, similarly functioned as an adjunct to herbal medicine by facilitating the removal of spiritual obstructions and thus increasing the effectiveness of the administered medicine. It was not linked with any specific illness, but rather was employed for general relief of minor ailments.<sup>115</sup>

The individual requesting the game was required to furnish the ball\* and select the five players for each side from opposite moieties. Occasionally the moiety division was ignored and the young men were pitted against

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\*The Cayuga ball was about six inches in diameter, and made of rags covered with canvas.<sup>116</sup>





their elders,<sup>117</sup> although the reason for the latter has been forgotten.

The game was contested on a field some fifty yards in length outside the longhouse, where temporary wooden goal posts had been erected, about eight feet apart, at the north and south end of the playing area.<sup>118</sup> The game's sponsor was obligated to cast the ball into the air to start the game,<sup>119</sup> and again after each goal was scored--three goals concluding the contest. In so far as this contest was primarily a kicking game, the players were only permitted to use their hands to strike the ball to the ground. As rules were few, so too were field positions, a goalkeeper being the only one mentioned.<sup>120</sup> As in other contests of this nature, the outcome was immaterial to the curing, the most significant act, according to the participants, being the initial throw by the patient.<sup>121</sup>

When played at the Midwinter Festival, the patient was required to present the players with a helping of cakes and corn mush at the conclusion of the game<sup>122</sup> "a symbol of feasting the spirits by proxy to satisfy them."<sup>123</sup> This practice appears to be standard whenever football and lacrosse were employed for curative purposes. "At these games," writes Harrington, "the 'patient' provides a feast for the crowd and is supposed to receive benefit from the dream-spirit who is pleased by the game."<sup>124</sup> In turn, the sponsor was presented with the game ball. As a charm, it was believed to ensure complete recovery and continued good health.<sup>125</sup>

As previously mentioned, a variant form of football was also employed as a medicinal rite. In this version of the game, a flaming oil-soaked ball was used.<sup>126</sup> Unlike the standard curative game, the ball was not thrown into the air by the patient to commence the game--probably for very obvious reasons. Because of the feared association with the occult, an association



vehemently denied by its adherents, the game was always played at night and in private.<sup>127</sup>

As a medicinal rite, lacrosse was only occasionally played at the Midwinter Festival. Like other rites of this nature, it resulted from a dream and was conducted by a Medicine Society. "The game itself is both an act of prayer and a magical attempt to reinforce the struggle for life that the patient is making."<sup>128</sup>

Prior to the game, the players engaged in a period of fasting, purging with emetics and prayers.<sup>129</sup> The athletes, seven per side selected from opposing moieties, then stripped to the waist and played barefoot in the snow.

The field was approximately a quarter of a mile in length and possessed no side boundaries. Two goal posts were erected at each end of the playing area, seven paces apart. Although rules were few, governing only the method of scoring a goal, and hand/foot contact with the ball, violence was rare for "the more skill, verve, and speed, [in the game] the better for the patient and the more reason for the gods to be pleased."<sup>130</sup> The Cayuga contest was terminated after a pre-determined number of goals had been scored--usually one, two or three. The game was not used as a medium of divination on this occasion and victory was of no significance in terms of the ritual. The vanquished were, however, required to provide a meal for the victors, and could only break their fast at the invitation of the latter.

One of the more famous games of this nature was played by the Onondaga in 1815 at the request of the dying Seneca prophet, Handsome Lake.<sup>131</sup>

As mentioned in the chapter on climatic games, lacrosse was sometimes



prescribed for curative purposes at the Iroquoian Thunder Ceremonies, in conjunction with the War Dance.<sup>132</sup> Although when employed for medicinal reasons, the game was always associated with the War Dance, the reverse was not the case, as the dance was frequently conducted by itself as a curative rite. Nevertheless, the two usually operated in tandem at the Thunder Ceremony. It should be pointed out that the Iroquois refer to the War Dance by the same term which they employ in reference to the Osage.<sup>133</sup> However, no evidence exists of the Osage, or their Eastern Culture Area kin, the Quapaw, employing this dance or lacrosse for remedial purposes.

Unlike the Midwinter version of the rite, lacrosse was directed, on this occasion, to the spirit forces above the earth, specifically the Thunderers, and was employed for the benefit of those individuals in the congregation who suffered from "thunder-caused diseases."<sup>134</sup> These remedial games were played after the principal rite of the ceremony--that being the lacrosse match employed to influence the elements--but before the ceremony's concluding address.<sup>135</sup>

Participation in the medicinal game was unrestricted<sup>136</sup> both in terms of Medicine Society affiliation and the number of competitors involved. However, teams were structured along moiety lines.<sup>137</sup> Although players were required to provide their own sticks, the ball, supplied by the patient,<sup>138</sup> had to have been used in the same type of game before.

Prior to the rite, "the speaker explained the occasion and purpose of the game to the players and . . . admonished them to play fairly and without malice. . . ."<sup>139</sup> While in this instance the spokesman threw the ball into the air to begin the rite, it was customary for the patient, unless incapacitated, to make the initial throw<sup>140</sup> after first ducking



under a pair of crossed game sticks enclosing the ball.<sup>141</sup> Following the contest, the athletes were feasted on the field at the position where they had finished playing.<sup>142</sup> These acts were considered the essence of the "medicine."

Medically, it was unimportant which side won the game.<sup>143</sup> The rag ball was presented to the patient at the conclusion of the rite, to be employed in all future games of this nature contested on his behalf. The game, when used for this purpose by the contemporary Iroquois, is played according to the traditional tribal rules and terminates when either three or seven goals have been scored.\*

Lacrosse was also employed for similar reasons on a needs basis. At such times, the patient and his family sponsored the curing rite, and invited friends, relatives, acquaintances known to have been similarly cured, and a number of specialists well versed in the execution of the ritual.<sup>144</sup> Although ". . . it was deemed of value as a remedial exercise for many ills . . ."<sup>145</sup> the game, on this occasion, was commonly employed as a remedy for sore legs.<sup>146</sup>

As the Huron employed the rite in times of a national emergency, so too did the Iroquois. "When a famine or epidemic threatened the people," wrote Converse, "the medicine man would order a game of lacrosse to be played to propitiate the spirits. . . . It was necessary that all the people, young and old, women and men, should attend this game. Some were chosen to personate the evil spirit and receive punishment, and should a death ensue it was deemed a favorable omen."<sup>147</sup> For several days prior to the contest, the

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\*In some versions, the contest is continued until a total of three, five or seven goals have been scored by both sides.<sup>148</sup>





participants directed prayers to the Great Spirit, and engaged in a period of fasting. All present were required to join in both the contest and the religious dances and ceremonies concluding the ritual.<sup>149</sup>

Purification rites were common whenever lacrosse was used for medicinal purposes. These rites consisted of purging by blood-letting and the administration of emetics to induce vomiting, together with bowel movements, sweating, fasting, and the avoidance of unclean objects, such as menstruating women.<sup>150</sup> Practices, such as these, were designed to secure ". . . the aid of the sorcerers of life who could hasten the return to health."<sup>151</sup> Although Shimony<sup>152</sup> states that purification rites were not associated with the Thunder Rite lacrosse matches, there is reason to suspect that they may have only recently been deleted, for elsewhere she records that purging was, at one time, standard before all important lacrosse games and footraces.<sup>153</sup>

One other medicinal practice must be noted in conjunction with lacrosse. Parker recalls that Mohawk women suffering from rheumatism ". . . or some like disease . . ."<sup>154</sup> prepared a pudding of boiled parched cornmeal, maple sugar and meat, and presented it to a lacrosse player. The athlete, upon eating it, ". . . is supposed to charm away the disorder by his activity."<sup>155</sup> Although only recorded among the Mohawk, similar practices were possibly prevalent within the other Iroquoian cultures.

Possibly one of the more unusual medical rites of the Iroquois was the Pulling Rite.<sup>156</sup> Performed only during the Midwinter Festival by the unrestricted societies, it bore a strong resemblance to the European game of tug-of-war. Unlike the other contests used for remedial purposes, it does not appear to have had a social counterpart, nor was it used for any



purposes other than healing. Even in this capacity, it was employed only rarely, being held in abeyance until the malady it was designed to cure was noticed, or believed to be present in the community.

The actual sickness for which it was used is difficult to isolate. Speck and General state that "the rite is a cure for an urge to seize hold of something--manifestly a seizing compulsion"<sup>157</sup> and further cloud the issue by listing gripping, trembling and nervous afflictions<sup>158</sup> as conditions for which the rite was employed. It does appear, however, that the ailment was psychosomatic in nature, and occurred more frequently among the women.

The stick employed in the contest was about one to one and a half inches in diameter, and between one and two feet in length.<sup>159</sup> Owned by the patient,<sup>160</sup> it was given to the two men who were to direct the ritual. These two men, one from each moiety:

. . . grasp the stick, facing each other in the middle of the Long House above a dividing line on the floor, which also represents the division boundary of the two moieties, each man on his own moiety side. They grasp the stick--hands alternating, one palm up the other palm down--with a firm hold. Eight men from each moiety have moreover been chosen by the moiety "directors" to form the team supporting their leaders. They range behind their leaders, each holding the one in front of him tightly by locking his hands over the other's chest, one arm over the left shoulder the other under the right arm. The nine moiety contestants on each side of the line are then ready for the signal to pull.<sup>161</sup>

Before the command was given, the patient ducked under the stick, thus ensuring the success of the "medicine."<sup>162</sup> The object was then to pull the opposite moiety across the line or cause the opposing leader's grip to break. As was the case with other rites of this nature, food was presented to the participants upon its conclusion.

Gambling was not associated with this contest, nor was it used for



purposes of divination. The efficacy of the cure was related not to the outcome, but rather to the struggle, symbolised in the rite. To maximise this struggle, a song urging the contestants to "pull harder" was sometimes sung in conjunction with the contest.<sup>163</sup>

Although the teams were usually made up of men, occasionally all-female<sup>164</sup> and mixed competitions<sup>165</sup> were held. The sexual composition of the teams may have varied in accordance with the desires of the patient requesting the rite.

The bowl game, derivative of the Fourth Sacred Rite,<sup>\*</sup> frequently served as a curative agent, either by itself or in conjunction with the three other sacred rites.<sup>166</sup> The game was used in this capacity at the Midwinter Festival by the unrestricted medicine societies. At other times, it was held in the privacy of the patient's home to "cheer up" the ailing individual.<sup>167</sup> Like other contests of this nature, the bowl game was prescribed by a shaman who, usually through a dream, had been able to ascertain the nature of the illness. Although employed for a variety of maladies, it appears to have been more popular with the women as a cure for certain female disorders.<sup>168</sup>

The native, on whose behalf the game was contested, was expected to provide the necessary playing implements<sup>169</sup>--implements that were to be used on all subsequent observances.<sup>\*\*</sup> If an individual were requesting the game for the first time, he was expected to make, or have made for him, a bowl, peach-pit dice, counters and, occasionally, a special pillow for bouncing

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\* The Four Sacred Rites, the Feather Dance, Skin Dance, Thanksgiving Prayer and Bowl Game, were the focus of most of the major Iroquoian ceremonies.

\*\* If the Four Sacred Rites were prescribed, the ceremony had to be repeated annually, usually at the Midwinter Festival.<sup>170</sup>



the bowl.<sup>171</sup>

Normally, a shortened version of the game was played in which the patient was required to shake the bowl first, before handing it over to the scheduled players.<sup>172</sup> In some instances, the patient played a complete game against an opponent or opponents, of the same sex.<sup>173</sup> Shouts of encouragement were common in games of this type for the potency of the contest as a medicinal device was determined, not by the outcome, but by the degree of excitement generated during the game--"The harder you play, the better the medicine."<sup>174</sup>

As hitherto mentioned, esoteric forms of the bowl game were occasionally contested. One version utilised carved counters and figures rather than the regular beans. These counters were implanted in pots of soil as the game progressed<sup>175</sup> and were either destroyed at the conclusion of the rite or retained as fetished by the patient.<sup>176</sup> This medicinal game, believed to contain elements of witchcraft, because of its variation in ritual, was always conducted in the privacy of individual homes.<sup>177</sup> Among the Onondaga, moiety factionalism frequently resulted in the mutual suspicion of witchcraft. Thus the bowl game, when used for remedial purposes, was often played only by the members of the patient's moiety. On such occasions, the men played against the women.<sup>178</sup>

A curative rite that has been retained only in Iroquoian legend is that known as "rubbing the bowl."<sup>179</sup> According to informants, it was once performed ". . . to satisfy the chipmunk and remove the cause of illness in certain cases,"<sup>180</sup> although the maladies in question are not designated.

A number of strong men from one of the unrestricted societies formed a circle around one of their members. The centre figure then began to sing





to the rhythmic accompaniment of a rasping stick.\* During the song, he made continued attempts, to break out of the surrounding ring. The rite concluded when the player finally succeeded.

Like the rite of "rubbing the bowl," the game of hide and seek is similarly only mentioned in legend in relation to Iroquoian medical practices. In one of the Seneca stories of "Genonsgwa," related by Hewitt,<sup>181</sup> a sick man requests that his two nephews join him in a game of hide and seek. As the contest was known to be of medicinal value, the boys were unable to refuse, despite the fact that the vanquished stood to lose his head.\*\* As a means of promoting longevity, the game, on this occasion, must be considered a failure for it was the uncle that lost the contest, and in accordance with the wager, his head.

Although there is no documented evidence of the game being employed for curative purposes by the Iroquois, the fact that the association exists in legend indicates that hide and seek probably once served in this capacity.

While the games of hoop and pole and hand-dice were both reported to have been employed for remedial purposes, actual descriptions of their use in this capacity have not been recorded.

It may be stated in conclusion that games played a major role in the medicinal practices of the Six Nations. As a form of "medicine," they were second only to the Four Sacred Rituals in potency.<sup>182</sup> With minor exceptions, they called for reciprocity of the dual organisation, which

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\*

The same instrument was once used to accompany the wake-game songs of the Iroquois and Delaware.

\*\*

Hewitt's collection contains many stories revolving around the game situation--lacrosse, hide and seek, the bowl game, and foot and snow-shoe racing. Almost without exception, heads were bet on the outcome.<sup>183</sup>



TABLE IX

## IROQUOIS MEDICINAL GAMES

Game	Rite	Function	Contestants	Remarks
Bowl game (Short)	1. Dream Fulfillment 2. Friendship Renewal (not Onondaga) 3. Curative	1. Prevent illness 2. Prevent and cure illness 3a. General sickness b. Female disorders	1. Men and women 2. Men and women (Intermoiety) 3a. Men and women (Intermoiety) b. Men v women (Onondaga)	1a. Gambling b. Aids to influence game 2a. Gambling b. Also esoteric version 3a. Gambling b. Aids to influence game c. Also esoteric version
Dice game	Curative	?	Men and women?	
Dream Guessing	Dream Fulfillment	Prevent illness	Men and women	Prizes awarded
Football	1. Friendship Renewal 2. Curative	1. Prevent and cure illness 2. Minor ailments	1. Men v men 2. Men v men (Intermoiety)	1. Also esoteric version 2a. Also esoteric version b. Symbolic prizes awarded
Hide and Seek	Curative	?	Men v men	Only in legend
Hoop and Pole	1. Friendship Renewal 2. Curative	1. Prevent and cure illness 2. ?	1. Men v men? 2. Men v men?	



TABLE IX (continued)

Game	Rite	Function	Contestants	Remarks
Lacrosse	1. Friendship Renewal 2. Curative	1. Prevent and cure illness 2a. General sickness b. "Thunder diseases" c. Sore legs d. Rheumatism e. Epidemics	1. Men v men 2. Men v men (Intermoiety)	1. Pre-game preparations ? 2a. Pre-game preparations b. Symbolic prizes awarded
"Rubbing the Bowl"	Curative	?	Men v men	
Snow Snake	1. Dream Fulfillment 2. Friendship Renewal 3. Curative	1. Prevent illness 2. Prevent and cure illness 3a. General sickness b. Sore legs	1. Men v men 2. Men v men 3. Men v men (Intermoiety)	3. Symbolic prizes awarded
Tug-of-war	Curative	Psychosomatic conditions	Men v men Women v women (Intermoiety)	



resulted in the mutual cooperation of the members of both Iroquoian ritual groups.<sup>184</sup> Under these conditions, they were prescribed, along with herbal medicines, to combat specific maladies; they acted as agents in establishing or consolidating the ritual friendships deemed necessary for continued good health; they were contested to prevent illness, following their disclosure through the dream medium; and they served as mechanisms by which contact with certain spirits was reestablished, thus averting the reoccurrence of a previous illness.

### Summary

Games have only been noted in conjunction with the medicinal practices of the member tribes of the Iroquoian linguistic family. An exception was perhaps the Cherokee, who were geographically isolated from their linguistic kin and heavily influenced by the adjacent Siouan and Muscogean peoples. Even so, certain Cherokee medicinal rites closely paralleled those of the northern Iroquoians. It is therefore conceivable that game rites, although no longer used, may once have been employed as agents of medicine. Certainly the Cherokee grapevine pulling or tug-of-war contest<sup>185</sup> bears a marked similarity to the Cayuga pulling rite. The object of both games was identical, sexually integrated teams competed and food was served to the participants at the conclusion of the contests.

It should be noted also that the Cherokee, prior to their lacrosse matches, engaged in a series of pre-game rites<sup>186</sup> reminiscent of those associated with the medicinal lacrosse rites of the Six Nations and the Hurons. To elaborate would be to speculate.

Eleven games have been linked with the medicinal practices of the Iroquoian family, viz. the bowl game, the hand-dice game, the straw game,





a dream guessing contest, football, hoop and pole, lacrosse, snow-snake, tug-of-war, "rubbing the bowl," and hide and seek.

These play activities were employed on both an individual and a group basis to prevent, contain or cure a variety of maladies. Specifically they were used:

1. to prevent the reoccurrence of an earlier illness
2. to avoid contacting a particular illness
3. to increase the curative potency of other "medicines," and/or
4. to bring about a direct cure.

Some activities were considered effective in combatting more than one minor illness, while others were only prescribed in conjunction with specific mental or physical disorders.

The sexual composition of the teams appears to be related to either the rite in question or the sex of the sponsor. In general, men and women played together, although segregated teams have been observed. As illness was a communal concern, and the Huron and Iroquois societies were matrilineal, the males and females participated on an equal basis.

The medicinal value of the game rite was not determined by the sex of the contestants, nor was it influenced by the outcome of the contest. Rather, the potency of the rite lay in the manner in which it was contested --the more spirited the play, the more effective the cure. These homoeopathic or imitative rites<sup>187</sup> operated on the premise that as like produced like, the intense struggle portrayed in the game would automatically be duplicated by the patient, resulting in a complete recovery. Thus while the value of "medicines" of this nature may be queried from a physiological standpoint, their unknown psychological aspects must not be underrated



FOOTNOTES--CHAPTER IV

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## CHAPTER V

### GAMES AS THANKSGIVING/SUPPLICATORY FERTILITY RITES

The agrarian based cultures of eastern North America drew heavily on their natural resources, particularly in times of need, to supplement their diet. Even so, because of the potentially broad base of their economy, they rarely faced the hazards of widespread, devastating famine. Nevertheless, the possibility of such a catastrophe existed and the natives of the region were well aware of its inherent dangers.

It is not surprising then to find that a considerable portion of their ritualistic calendar was given over to rites of a fertility nature. Those preternatural forces, believed to control the growth of vegetation and the movement of wildlife, became the focal point of numerous major and minor ceremonies. On occasions such as these, the community was able to formally express its gratitude for assistance rendered in the past and, at the same time, humbly request help and guidance for the future. What better way to deliver messages of thanksgiving and supplication than to express them through activities known to be pleasing to the entities in question? It was for this reason that a variety of dances and games came to serve as fertility rites.

#### The Iroquois

The Iroquois conducted numerous festivals throughout the course of their ceremonial year. Although they differed in format, number, and time of scheduling from tribe to tribe, they served as occasions during





which supplicatory and thanksgiving rites could be directed to those entities believed responsible for controlling the natural environment. As native survival depended on the by-products of the environment, the rituals portrayed strong fertility overtones. The major Iroquoian ceremonies of this type included:

1. The Midwinter or New Year Ceremony,
2. The Bush Dance,
3. The Maple Sap Ceremony,
4. The Corn or Seed Planting Ceremony,
5. The Moon and Sun Ceremonies,
6. The Corn Sprouting Ceremony,
7. The Strawberry Ceremony,
8. The Raspberry Ceremony,
9. The Green Bean Ceremony,
10. The Corn Testing Ceremony,
11. The Green Corn Dance,
12. Our Life Supporters Ceremony, and
13. The Harvest Festival.

It should be borne in mind that this order of presentation was not rigid and that the inclusion of local ceremonies, such as a separate Cayuga Thanksgiving Ceremony<sup>1</sup> and the Whortleberry Festival of the Seneca<sup>2</sup> resulted in a certain amount of intertribal variation.

While in theory, some ceremonies were reserved solely for thanksgiving worship and others for the purpose of supplication, in reality most contained both elements. The organisation and conduction of specific festivals fell to the women, others were under the jurisdiction of the men.



The winter ceremonies of the Cayuga, for example, were conducted by the males, the summer ceremonies by the females.<sup>3</sup> The reciprocal cooperation of both sexes, however, was deemed essential for the success of the festivals.

The Midwinter Ceremony, occasionally called the New Year or White Dog Festival,<sup>4</sup> was the high point of the Iroquoian ceremonial calendar. Held in late January or early February, depending on the appearance of the new moon, it marked the termination of the ceremonial year past and the commencement of the new.<sup>5</sup> For this reason it was called the "mid-year ceremonial mark" by the Cayuga.<sup>6</sup>

The purpose of the Midwinter Festival was to offer thanksgiving to all the spiritual forces, particularly the Great Spirit ". . . for the blessings of life, health, and sustenance and the privileges of social life."<sup>7</sup> Lasting from seven days to three weeks,<sup>8</sup> depending on the group in question, this major ceremony synthesised all the ritual units of the Iroquoian ceremonial system--sacred and social dances, medicine society rites, symbolic and sacrificial acts.

The ceremony was divided into two major sections.<sup>9</sup> The first part, consisting of personal well-being and curing rites, has been discussed in the chapter on medicinal games and can be considered further only in terms of its relationship to the second part of the ceremony and the overall purpose of the festival. Of all the rites addressed to the Great Spirit in the ceremony, the most important were conducted during its second portion. These were the Four Sacred Rites and included, in order of presentation, the Great Feather Dance, the Individual Chant of Thanksgiving, the Skin Dance, and the Bowl Game.<sup>10</sup> Referred to as either the "Great Spirit's Ceremonies" or the "Four Sacred Words,"<sup>11</sup> their origin can be traced to the



story of "The Fatherless Boy." This myth relates how a lad born of a virgin mother was sent by the Great Spirit to teach the Four Sacred Rites to the people. After schooling his playmates in the Feather Dance, Skin Dance and Thanksgiving prayer he disappeared, to return to them as a spirit in their old age. Upon appearing before them again, "he said, 'I have come to teach you the Bowl Game, which will be the last act of our gathering.' So he gave them the peach pits and a bowl and taught them how to play the game. . . . While they were playing the game, he disappeared."<sup>12</sup>

While overtones of Christianity are evident here, the rites themselves had been in use long before the European arrived. It is possible that the prophet, Handsome Lake,<sup>\*</sup> was instrumental in modifying the story, as the Cayuga now equate the boy with Christ. Others, such as the Mohawk and Onondaga, believe that he was Dekanawida, the culture hero and founder of the Six Nations.<sup>13</sup> Similarly, the Seneca attribute the introduction of the game into their culture to the original To-do-há-ho,<sup>\*\*</sup> a powerful Onondaga ruler, who, upon conquering them, was instrumental in the formation of the Iroquois Confederacy.

Although the rites per se are ancient, the presentation as a unit is fairly recent and can probably be attributed to the early Nineteenth Century teachings of Handsome Lake.<sup>14</sup> Whatever their history, they were given as a unit at the Midwinter Ceremony and directed solely to the Great

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<sup>\*</sup> Handsome Lake (1735-1815) was a Seneca prophet who, as a result of a vision, introduced the so-called "New Religion" to the Iroquois at the turn of the Eighteenth Century. His teachings, a blend of Christianity and traditional Iroquoian beliefs, quickly became the dominant religion among the peoples of the Six Nations.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>\*\*</sup> The To-do-há-ho was the most dignified title or Sachemship in the League of the Iroquois.<sup>16</sup>



Spirit.<sup>17</sup>

Of all the games played during the ceremony, and there were frequently many, most serving as medicinal agents, the bowl game or the "great game,"<sup>18</sup> in its capacity as the last of the Four Sacred Rites, was undoubtedly the most important.<sup>19</sup>

Normally the rite was scheduled for the second last or final day of the ceremony.<sup>20</sup> One Seneca group, for example, began their game on the sixth morning of the seven-day ceremony and continued play on the following day until the contest was completed.<sup>21</sup> Traditionally, "since the Bowl Game is one of the ceremonies dedicated to the Creator and hence should be performed only before noon,\* . . . it was always adjourned at noon, begun again the next morning, and so continued until it was finished."<sup>22</sup> Other Seneca groups adopted a similar format although the duration of the ceremony and the scheduled time of the bowl game varied. To illustrate, in a nine day ceremony, the game began on the morning of the eighth day and was concluded, in some areas, on the ninth and last day of the festival, while other Seneca peoples required several days to finish their game.<sup>23</sup> The Cayuga<sup>24</sup> began and completed the game on the last day of their Midwinter Festival.\*\* An exception to the rule occurred among the Onondaga, who played a three-day bowl game as a renewal rite to the Great Spirit on the fourth, fifth and sixth days of their fourteen-day ceremony.<sup>25</sup> Although they too played on the final ceremonial day of their festival, the game was, at this time,

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\*Iroquois mythology records that the mornings belonged to the Great Spirit and the afternoons to his evil twin brother.<sup>26</sup>

\*\*Originally, the game was terminated at noon and, if unfinished, continued on succeeding mornings until such time as a victor was determined. The contemporary Cayuga, however, never extend the game beyond two days and even this extension is rare.<sup>27</sup>





dedicated to the sun--a rite given further consideration at a later point.

The game was formally introduced following the Skin Dance--the third of the Sacred Rites--on the day preceding the contest. At this time, a tobacco\* invocation served to announce the forthcoming ritual to the Great Spirit.<sup>28</sup> As the Midwinter bowl game was a gambling game,<sup>29</sup> a committee of four, consisting of a man and a woman from each moiety, was established to supervise the contest and its associated betting.<sup>30</sup> This committee appointed several runners to circulate throughout the community and collect the stakes to be wagered on the outcome of the rite.<sup>31</sup> The runners made their rounds in the late afternoon and evening canvassing their respective moiety members.<sup>32</sup> The articles wagered had to be of personal value\*\* and given in the spirit of sacrifice, as all betting during the Midwinter Ceremony was dedicated to the Great Spirit.<sup>33</sup> The more valuable the item, the greater the spiritual blessing. Thus the stakes, in a sense, were viewed as sacrificial objects. It was further believed that as the Four Sacred Rites would be performed in heaven after death, the items wagered should be of a type suitable for use in the after-life.<sup>34</sup> "Whatever you lose . . . , you will see it back again in heaven."<sup>35</sup> The wager-offerings were returned to the longhouse, paired according to their value and the moiety affiliation of their donor, tied together, and set aside to await distribution among the winning team.<sup>36</sup> In addition to the individual wagers made each moiety placed a team bet, usually of wampum, which hung in the longhouse until the contest was decided.<sup>37</sup>

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\*Tobacco was considered as an aid to those attempting to communicate with the spirit forces.<sup>38</sup>

\*\*The use of European money as a stake was, on this occasion, frowned upon.



The game, contested between moiety teams, began with a thanksgiving address and instructions that the "Betting Day"<sup>39</sup> rite was played to please the Great Spirit and should thus be contested with this in mind.<sup>40</sup> It was mandatory that the moiety which had lost the last ceremonial game should begin the Midwinter game.<sup>41</sup> It was on this basis that play began.\* The two chiefs were followed by their assistants and finally the remaining members of the gathering.<sup>42</sup> The committee charged with running the game settled disputes and was responsible for establishing team playing orders. As the long version of the game was played,<sup>43</sup> the people were free to drift in and out of the longhouse at their discretion. They were, however, required to use the entrance set aside for their ceremonial group and once inside, to sit in the area reserved for their moiety. A breach in these regulations then, as on other occasions, resulted in the offender's face being blackened with charcoal<sup>44</sup>--the symbolism of which has long been forgotten. Play continued until one of the two moieties had won all the scoring beans, whereupon the stakes, both individual and team, were distributed and a dance or song was performed to thank the Great Spirit for terminating the game.<sup>45</sup> In line with the sacrificial concept of gambling, it is noteworthy that the vanquished considered themselves fortunate to lose, believing their rewards would become greater upon death.<sup>46</sup> The prominence of the bowl game rite is indicated by the fact that the closing rituals of this extremely important ceremony were frequently delayed until the contest had been played to its conclusion.<sup>47</sup>

It should be mentioned that the Iroquoian Midwinter Festival was

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\*The Midwinter and Green Corn bowl games were begun and finished with a series of whoops, the significance of which has been lost.<sup>48</sup>



anciently marked by the burning of a white dog on the day that began the latter portion of the ceremony.<sup>49</sup> The sacrifice was accompanied by tobacco and verbal invocations directed to the Great Spirit.<sup>50</sup> While Speck and General<sup>51</sup> maintain that the Cayuga sacrifice was not connected with the bowl game, except in the sense that both were addressed to the Great Spirit, Smith<sup>52</sup> recalls that among the Onondaga, the animal, upon being strangled, was presented to the victorious gambling party who prepared it for roasting. The losing team was required to make offerings to the sacrificial animal before joining their conquerors at the burning. The ceremony and accompanying ritual symbolised the reunion and continued solidarity of the community.\*

The Onondaga three-day game differed from the other Iroquoian games, both by virtue of the fact that it was scheduled during the early portion of their festival rather than towards the end, and that carved sticks and and figurines, similar to those depicted in Figure 6, were employed in lieu of beans to facilitate scoring--the former serving as counters and the latter as mnemonic score-keeping devices. There is also evidence to the effect that matchsticks were surreptitiously used as master counters.<sup>53</sup>

An interesting aspect of the Onondaga contest was the pre-game preparations, similar to those observed prior to the Huron medicinal bowl games.<sup>54</sup> Esoteric games were held in private homes by each rival moiety just before the contest began in the longhouse and again prior to its resumption on the second evening. They were believed capable of influencing the outcome of the longhouse game. To ensure continued success, or alternately, to change the course of the game, charms, incantations, certain

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\*The Onondaga, unlike the other Iroquoian tribes, played their bowl game for the Great Spirit before the sacrifice.



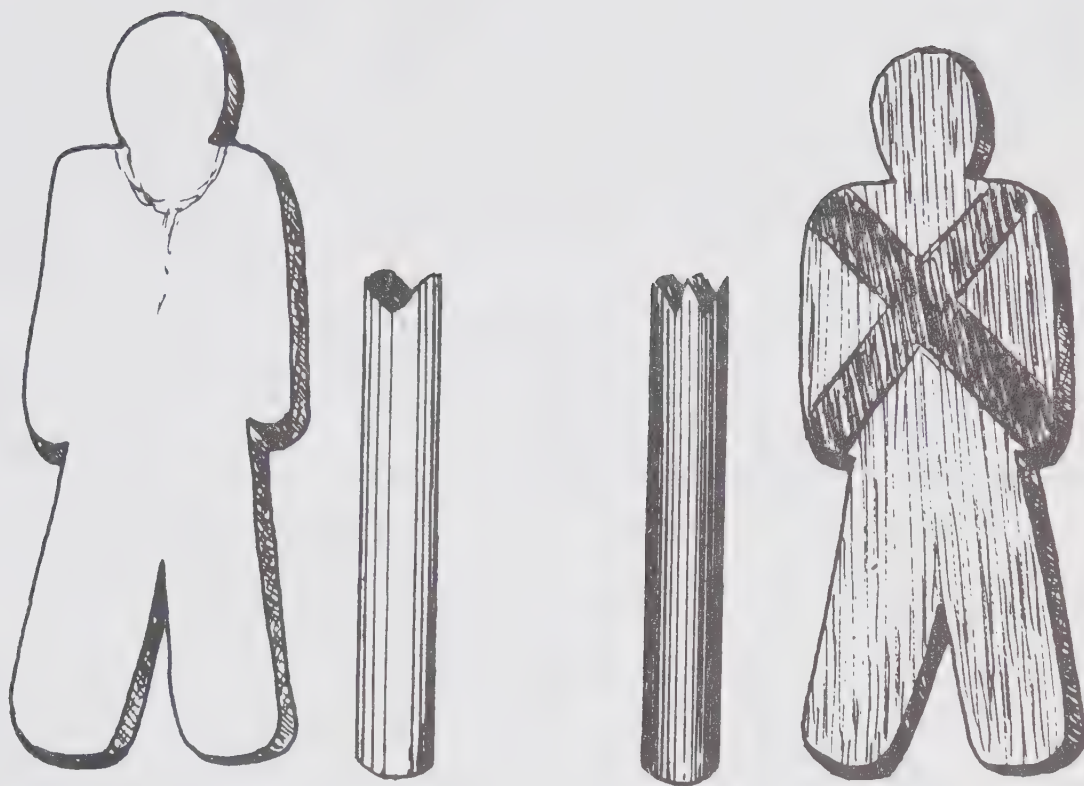


FIGURE 6

ONONDAGA BOWL GAME FIGURINES AND CARVED COUNTERS<sup>55</sup>

foods, songs, and the contents of dreams were employed to exhort the dice. At this time also, the team playing order was established. The order of play was such that the anchor man was usually a person credited with a considerable amount of orenda or personal power and was kept in reserve should all else fail.<sup>56</sup>

Formulae, songs of power, fetishes, predictive dreams, and the like, were not the only sources of power that could be utilised in the Midwinter bowl game. The wooden figurines and notched stick counters employed in the contest constituted an additional form of power since the victorious team





of the previous year retained its pieces but made the figures and counters anew for their opposition each Midwinter. They thus had ample opportunity to hex those of the opposing moiety. It is worthy to note that one set of figures was considered as "Indians" and the other as "White Men," and further, that the "Indians" consistently dominated the "White Men" in this symbolic battle.<sup>57</sup>

Immediately prior to the Midwinter game, representatives from each moiety burnt a small bundle of counter sticks in the longhouse and recited a supplication for success. This was naturally done in private lest the prayer be nullified.<sup>58</sup>

The Onondaga state that the game had to be played for three successive days before a victor could be declared. The fact that the score was never announced at the conclusion of each day's play suggests a certain amount of juggling on the part of the scorekeepers to fulfil this requirement. However, when an early victory appeared inevitable, the game was terminated before it occurred to avoid the rite being invalidated.<sup>59</sup>

As previously mentioned, the Onondaga also played a bowl game on the fourteenth and last day of their Midwinter Festival in honour of the sun. Although Smith<sup>60</sup> infers that traditionally other games may have been contested at this time, only the bowl game has survived. The relationship of this game to the sun is considered at a later point, but it is known to have been an inter-sexual contest, the men playing against the women. As each piece was believed to possess ". . . its own familiar spirit . . ."<sup>61</sup> the rite functioned as a divinatory device. "If the men win, the ears of corn will be long, like them; but if the women gain the game, they will be short. . . ."<sup>62</sup> Similarly, a male victory was believed to result in a large



pumpkin crop, a female victory in an abundance of berries.<sup>63</sup> The latter prediction reflected a simple division of labour, as berry picking was exclusively a female activity, while the men frequently assisted with harvesting the horticultural crops.<sup>64</sup> Thus, when the dice "turned up right," they symbolised fertility and a bountiful harvest.

The Bush Dance was the first ritual of the new Iroquoian ceremonial year. It was scheduled for the latter part of February and served as the occasion during which the spirit forces of the trees and bushes were afforded recognition and thanksgiving.<sup>65</sup> Although the ceremony has largely remained undocumented, it is known that one of its rites included a short bowl game contested between the men and the women.<sup>66</sup>

Between mid-March and mid-April, a one-day Maple or Sap Ceremony was conducted by the women.<sup>67</sup> The purpose of this ceremony was to thank the trees for their services to mankind, and to invoke their protection and good will for the coming year.<sup>68</sup> Although the rites were directed specifically to the maple tree\* for the syrup it supplied,<sup>69</sup> the ceremony was also addressed, in part, to the Great Spirit.<sup>70</sup> Originally the rites were conducted in a maple grove shortly after the sap had begun to flow;<sup>71</sup> However, the ceremony is now conducted in the longhouse when the sap-flow has ceased.<sup>72</sup> While the majority of the Six Nations only scheduled this ceremony once a year, the Onondaga and Seneca conducted two separate services: one when the sap began to run, and the second when the flow ceased and the maple sugar was made.<sup>73</sup>

Although varying from tribe to tribe in both number and order of

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\*The maple tree was considered the most prominent tree in the Seneca flora hierarchy.<sup>74</sup>



presentation, the rites normally consisted of several dances, a tobacco invocation and a bowl game. The Cayuga festival, for example, concluded with a bowl game<sup>75</sup> while other groups conducted the game during the early stages of their ceremony,<sup>76</sup> Unlike some of the other rites, the bowl game was common to all the Iroquoian Maple Sap Ceremonies, including the dual rituals of the Seneca and the Onondaga. Little has been recorded of the game in relation to this ceremony except that it was brief<sup>77</sup> and was played between the men and the women.<sup>78</sup> Although Tooker<sup>79</sup> states that it was contested in honour of the spirit of the maple, it was in fact, being one of the Four Sacred Rites, addressed to the Great Spirit.<sup>80</sup>

Certain Iroquoian tribes also included a bone-dice or hand-dice game in their Maple Sap Ceremonies.<sup>81</sup> Contested after the bowl game, it was almost certainly played in honour of the maple tree. Morgan noted that, among the Seneca, a game in which eight elk-horn buttons were thrown by hand, ". . . was sometimes introduced as an amusement at the season of religious councils, the people dividing into tribes . . . and betting upon the result."<sup>82</sup> Although he does not elaborate, his observation seems to infer that the game of hand-dice may once have been linked with a number of Seneca rituals. It is only in conjunction with the Maple Sap Ceremony, however, that its existence has been verified.

The Corn or Seed Planting Ceremony was held between the end of April and mid-May, just prior to sowing. The purpose of the ceremony was to "entertain" the food spirits--particularly the Three Sisters, corn, beans and squash--to express thanks, and to request the continued assistance of the fruit and grain spirits.<sup>83</sup> Occasionally an appeal for rain and mild temperatures during the growing season was levied at this time.<sup>84</sup>



The ceremony was made up of a series of dances, songs and a bowl game.<sup>85</sup> The Cayuga ceremony, for example, consisted of seven different rites, the second performed being the bowl game.<sup>86</sup> The contest was run by the women along a sexual, rather than a moiety division. It was played in the longhouse where the bowl was placed on an imaginary line dividing the males and the females. The honour of the first toss belonged to the women and the game continued until all the counter beans had been secured by one side. Although the contest was an abbreviated version of the regular game, it did involve gambling. Unlike the gambling associated with the game on other occasions, however, personal items were not staked at this time, nor did the contestants engage in side betting. Rather the items wagered took the form of packets of seeds--corn, bean, and squash (or pumpkin). These were collected from individual contestants prior to the rite and paired in readiness for distribution at the conclusion of the game. Thus, members of the winning side received two packets of seeds--their own and one from the vanquished opposite sex.<sup>87</sup>

The prominence of the bowl game rite is indicated by the fact that the natives frequently alluded to the Planting Ceremony by a term which translates as "our seeds we bet."<sup>88</sup> While the expression refers specifically to the bowl game, it is worthy to note that it could also be applied to the act of sowing, for in a sense, the natives gambled on the success of their planted seeds. That the game once served in a divinatory capacity further attests to its importance in the ceremony.<sup>89</sup> While sexual rivalry was friendly and the game's outcome provided a source of inter-group jesting\*.

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\* When the males won, the women jokingly claimed that the men should tend the crops during the coming season--a task that traditionally belonged to the women. A female victory, however, brought the male retort that there would be no corn that year as the women were too lazy to plant the seeds.<sup>90</sup>





the belief was held that a victory by the men would result in weedy gardens and a probable crop failure. On the other hand, a female win virtually ensured a successful season. It was further believed that the wagered seeds, when planted, produced ". . . the healthiest, most fruitful, and most luxuriant crops of the season."<sup>91</sup> Thus the game, in addition to promoting the aid of certain food spirits, was also believed to provide the community with a supply of exceptionally fertile seeds.

Reference was made earlier to the Moon and Sun Ceremonies in conjunction with the Iroquoian Thunder Rite. The ceremonies, thought to be vestiges of an earlier set of beliefs, were usually conducted together, in so far as their aims were similar. All tribes, including those that had incorporated elements of these ceremonies into other rituals, such as the Seneca, nevertheless continued to pay tribute to these entities by performing separate rites for them. The ceremonies were usually scheduled in the spring either immediately before, or just following the Seed Planting Ceremony.<sup>92</sup> Both were of a thanksgiving/supplicatory nature.

The Moon Ceremony, occasionally scheduled on the basis of a dream,<sup>93</sup> is of prime interest here. As the moon was believed to regulate the growing season,<sup>94</sup> the ritual was designed to secure the moon's assistance during planting and her support for the crops throughout their period of growth.<sup>95</sup> "As the peach stone gambling game is thought especially pleasing to the moon . . ."<sup>96</sup> the major rite of the ceremony was the bowl game. This rite was basically the same as that played during the Seed Planting Ceremony, being an abbreviated version of the standard game and contested between the men and the women.<sup>97</sup> If the items wagered were packets of seeds, and it seems likely that they were, then the only difference that existed between



the games on these two occasions lay in the fact that the men, rather than the women were charged with conducting the bowl game at the Moon Ceremony.<sup>98</sup>

The Sun Ceremony, which normally followed the Moon Ceremony,<sup>99</sup> permitted the people to thank this body for the heat supplied to their crops in the past, and to request continued warmth for their growth in the coming season. Although there is no evidence to suggest that games were included among the rites of this ceremony, the bowl game was played as a sacred agricultural rite ". . . in honour of our Great Warrior Brother, the Sun"<sup>100</sup> during the Planting, Green Corn, Harvest and Midwinter Ceremonies of at least one Onondaga group.<sup>101</sup> These people recognised the sun as an important natural and spiritual force vital to the successful growth of their crops, a geocentric concept stemming from an early set of cosmological beliefs. The relationship between the sun and the bowl game is no longer remembered, although the common denominator appears to revolve around their agricultural produce. This is evidenced by the many agricultural symbols in the bowl game complex. To illustrate: the bowl itself was carved from the wood of an apple tree--usually a large knot or burl--rather than the softer, more manageable woods so favoured by the Iroquoian mask carvers.<sup>102</sup> Similarly, the dice employed in the game were either plum pits or peach stones,\* and beans were normally used as game counters (Figure 7). In the same vein, certain terms displaying agricultural overtones, such as "he made a field"<sup>103</sup> were frequently expressed during the course of play,<sup>104</sup> while small round corn-bread cakes, representing the sun, were placed on a bench overlooking the players.<sup>105</sup>

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\*Plum stones probably served as the original dice as peaches were not introduced into North America until after the advent of the European.<sup>106</sup>





FIGURE 7

CAYUGA WOODEN BOWL, PEACH-PIT DICE AND BEAN COUNTERS<sup>107</sup>

These Onondaga peoples believed that the game was regulated by the sun who projected a beam of light into the bowl.<sup>108</sup> Thus, just as this entity was able to influence the growth of the crops, so too was he able to govern the success or failure of individual players during the game. As an agricultural rite then, the game, on these occasions, dramatised the crop's struggle to attain maturity in the face of a sometimes-harsh environment.

The Green Corn Dance was one of the most important rituals in the Iroquoian ceremonial calendar, second only to the Midwinter Ceremony.<sup>109</sup> It lasted from three to eight days, depending on the tribe in question,<sup>110</sup> and was usually held in early autumn when the corn was close to maturity.<sup>111</sup>



Like other rituals of this nature, runners were dispatched several days prior to the ceremony to invite surrounding communities to assemble in order "to entertain our food-plants"<sup>112</sup> and to offer thanksgiving to the Great Spirit, the Thunderers and the food spirits for the success of the crops.<sup>113</sup>

The festival, arranged by the men,<sup>114</sup> contained, among others, all those rites performed at the Corn Planting Ceremony.<sup>115</sup> As such, a bowl game was included. This game, however, was a longer version than that played at the Corn Planting Ceremony, although its rules were identical.<sup>116</sup> Morgan incorrectly states that the game ". . . was not in the nature of a religious exercise, but a favorite entertainment, with which to terminate the Green Corn ceremonial."<sup>117</sup> Fenton<sup>118</sup> and Tooker<sup>119</sup> maintain, however, that the game on this occasion epitomised the struggle, described in an origin legend,<sup>120</sup> between the Great Spirit and his evil twin brother for control of the earth, with the honour of representing the Great Spirit being alternated between the opposing teams. In any event, the game was played as one of the Four Sacred Rites--the Rites in this instance being given as a unit and addressed to the Great Spirit.<sup>121</sup> Being the fourth of the Four Sacred Rites, it was conducted during the mornings of the latter portion of the festival.<sup>122</sup> Among those Seneca groups who held a three-day festival, for example, the game began on the second and finished on the third morning.<sup>123</sup> Other Seneca peoples began their game on the morning of the fourth day and continued play on succeeding mornings until a victor was declared.<sup>124</sup> The Cayuga, on the other hand, played on the last day of their three-day festival<sup>125</sup> as did the Onondaga, although the celebrations of the latter lasted in certain areas, for eight days.<sup>126</sup>





The bowl game was normally contested between two sexually integrated teams from opposing moieties<sup>127</sup> although Smith<sup>128</sup> claims that, while the Onondaga sometimes divided along these lines, it was more common for them to pit one sex against the other, an observation supported by Tooker.<sup>129</sup> As the game was considered as one of the Great Spirit's principal amusements, the participants were apparently costumed,<sup>130</sup> although it is not clear exactly what form this costume took.

Following a thanksgiving address, the game began under the watchful eyes of two men and two women representing the opposing teams.<sup>131</sup> Two chieftains were requested to initiate the game, the one first bouncing the bowl having made the last losing shake at the previous bowl game.\* They were followed by the male and female shamans, and finally by the remaining members of the congregation.<sup>132</sup> Participants were expected to play cheerfully and patiently and display no malice or anger. Indeed, they were counselled to this effect before the game began<sup>133</sup> since the contest was under the auspices of a superior being and was ". . . pursued for his amusement only."<sup>134</sup> To further his pleasure, play was accompanied by animated expressions of enthusiasm on the part of the gathering.<sup>135</sup> As the game was believed to be regulated by the Great Spirit, it was accepted that the contest would be terminated by him when his interest waned; ". . . the beans all of a sudden all go one way, and it is over."<sup>136</sup> Despite this belief, certain individuals claimed to possess insight into the behaviour of the beans and were believed capable of predicting the result of the contest.

Gambling was associated with the rite, a "stake" being collected

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\*A chief was always required to conclude the game for the losing side.<sup>137</sup>



from each household in the village prior to its commencement. As the game was played for the Great Spirit, certain stakes were deemed more appropriate than others. These included wampum, jewellery, lacrosse sticks, rattles, clothing, and war clubs.<sup>138</sup> A money wager, although it did occasionally occur, was not considered in good taste. The stakes were then paired, one from each moiety, tied together and placed to one side of the longhouse.<sup>139</sup> While the sorting was in progress, "few persons spoke . . . and those that did, expressed themselves in whispers because . . . [the Great Spirit] was present overlooking all the arrangements, and it was not proper that he should be disturbed."<sup>140</sup> Gambling was considered a religious act,<sup>141</sup> and items were offered in a spirit of sacrifice rather than of competition for ". . . it is spiritually more beneficial to lose than to win."<sup>142</sup> Losers were believed to be compensated for their earthly loss following death, as the essence of the article awaited them in heaven. The strength of this belief is indicated by the statement "You'll see it back-- it will come back to you,"<sup>143</sup> In addition to personal stakes, a team bet was often placed by one member of each side. "The more valuable . . . the article, the more spiritual credit accrues to the bettor,"<sup>144</sup> and assumedly to the individual members of his or her side. At the conclusion of the contest, each member of the winning moiety, or sex in the case of the Onondaga, claimed his stake together with the one tied to it. Similarly, the player who made the group bet for the victorious team, received both items at stake.

While theoretically the outcome was ritually immaterial, the game was, in reality, highly competitive. This is illustrated by the illicit medicines and charms employed to influence the fall of the stones, by the



unauthorised fights that occasionally occurred over a questionable throw, and by the close supervision of the four "referees."<sup>145</sup> Likewise, counting the tally beans at the end of each day's play, although prohibited, was widely ignored.\* Thus contrary to the expressed purpose of the game, it appears that, at least on a personal level, the material benefits and satisfaction derived from the competition may have been just as important as any spiritual benefits accrued.

The Harvest Festival, as the name implies, was held after the agricultural produce had been reaped and stored in readiness for winter, usually in late October or early November. This festival, the last major ritual of the Iroquoian ceremonial year, was primarily one of thanksgiving.<sup>146</sup>

Although Speck and General<sup>147</sup> outline the Cayuga ceremony, they do not list any games among the rites performed. However, Simms<sup>148</sup> notes that gambling with "peach stones" was a part of this Cayuga ritual. The Seneca and Onondaga also included the bowl game in their Harvest Festival rites and, like their neighbours, gambled on the outcome of the contest.<sup>149</sup> Stakes consisting of small items, such as native cloth, beadwork and tobacco, were paired and tied together as in the Green Corn ceremonial game. Glassware and money, however, were considered in poor taste because they were of European origin and thus not acceptable to the Great Spirit.<sup>150</sup>

As on other occasions, when a team of males was pitted against an opposing female team,\*\* the sexes were required to occupy opposite ends of

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\*When the game lasted for more than one day, the beans were wrapped in a white cloth and taken home at night by a "deaconess." They were only supposed to be counted and observed ". . . to the extent that one calls for a chief to 'be up' for the losing moiety at the last throw."<sup>151</sup>

\*\*The Onondaga structured their teams on a moiety, rather than a sexual division during the Harvest Ceremony.<sup>152</sup>



the longhouse.

Prior to commencing the game, the contestants were cautioned to control their tempers and play fairly ". . . because, . . . the side that loses this time may be favored by . . . [the Great Spirit] the next time, and it will displease Him should there be any bad feeling."<sup>153</sup> Excitement still ran high during the contest with spectators shouting encouragement and patting the shoulders of successful team members. Similarly, it was common for a zealous observer to wave his hands over the bowl prior to the throw of an opposing player and utter an exclamation, believed capable of jinxing the contestant in question and influencing the turn of the dice.<sup>154</sup>

Despite these antics, and the gambling associated with the game, the outcome was theoretically of minor significance in so far as the rite was played under the auspices of, and as an act of gratitude to, a supreme being. Ardent Iroquoian gamblers, however, were afforded some measure of satisfaction immediately following the sacred agricultural game as a number of bowl games were then played ". . . 'just for fun', [and] as often as the people please."<sup>155</sup>

In closing, it is evident that games played an important role in many of the annual Iroquoian thanksgiving/supplicatory ceremonies. They in fact, served as the principal rite in approximately one half of the festivals examined, viz. Midwinter, Bush, Maple Sap, Corn or Seed Planting, Moon, Green Corn, and Harvest. That the major rites of these ceremonies were songs, dances and games, rather than prayers, has resulted in the Iroquois referring to their rituals as "doings" instead of services.<sup>156</sup> Although Tooker<sup>157</sup> states that the implements employed in the ceremonial games had no ritual significance, being merely the means to an end, it is





interesting that the bowl currently used by the Cayuga for their Fourth Sacred Rite has been in continuous use for over eighty years.<sup>158</sup>

Only a bowl game and a hand-dice game are still linked with these festivals. However, there is evidence to suggest that other play activities,\* now forgotten, may at one time have served as rites in some of the rituals.<sup>159</sup> It is worthy to note that both the bowl game and the hand-dice game were sedentary team games and, contrary to Culin's statement that "in their ceremonial form these [dice games] are distinctly men's games,"<sup>160</sup> involved both sexes--the men and women either opposing each other or playing together on moiety structured teams. While both games involved gambling, the activity in itself was quasi-religious. The moral overtones and symbolism of these gambling rites could not be described more adequately than through the revealing words of an Iroquoian deist:

Wagers are collected . . . to be given to the winning side. Wagers include any small articles of practical value. They must, nevertheless, be articles of some worth, constituting a gift as an act of sacrifice; clothing, best articles of apparel, and ornaments of value. Wampum is the first choice.

As each article is given it is tied to something of equal value given from the opposite moiety. . . . When the game is done, each person on the winning side receives back the article given with the similar article tied to it. It is, in a sense, an investment. The investment made, if the game goes right, will return interest plus itself. The same may be applied to life; one must give something to receive something, whereupon one goes to "heaven" provided that in the game of life he plays straight and right. If he does not play straight he will lose all.

According to the code of Handsome Lake, the winner does not gain anything; the loser gains all the benefit, not because he lost, but through the act of sacrifice. This is the blessing he receives.

When one does bad and evil things he does good for the evil spirit. He then goes to the evil spirit's side. At the end he goes to the place

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\*Card games were associated with the European and as such were rarely played. They were never contested at ceremonies of this nature.<sup>161</sup>



TABLE X

## THANKSGIVING/SUPPLICATORY GAMES AND CEREMONIES OF THE IROQUOIS

Ceremony	Game	Contestants	Spirit(s) Involved	Remarks
Midwinter	1. Long bowl game (inc. Onondaga)  2. Long bowl game (only Onondaga)	1. Men and women (Intermoiety)  2. Men v women	1. All spirit forces  2. Sun	1a. Gambling b. Pre-game preparat- ions (Onondaga) 2a. Gambling b. Divination
Bush Dance	Short bowl game	Men v women	Trees and bushes	Gambling?
Maple Sap	1. Short bowl game  2. Dice game	1. Men v women  2. Men v women?	1a. Trees b. Great Spirit 2. Maple tree	1. Gambling?  2. Gambling
Corn Planting	1. Short bowl game  2. Long bowl game (Onondaga)	1. Men v women  2. Men and women (Intermoiety)	1. Food spirits  2. Sun	1a. Symbolic gambling b. Divination 2a. Gambling b. Divination
Moon	Short bowl game	Men v women	Moon	Symbolic gambling
Green Corn	Long bowl game	a. Men and women (Intermoiety)  b. Men v women (Onondaga)	a. Food spirits Great Spirit Thunderers b. Sun (Onondaga)	Gambling, Aids to influence game
Harvest	1. Short? bowl game 2. Long bowl game (Onondaga)	1. Men v women 2. Men and women (Intermoiety)	1. Great Spirit 2. Sun	1. Gambling 2a. Gambling b. Aids to influence game



of the evil spirit and receives the rewards of that place, punishment and discomfort.

When one does good he does good for the Great Spirit. He goes to his place and lives satisfied forever.

One is expected to want to give sacrifices; to give to the poor and help the needy. When he lives his life he must live according to the codes and teachings; he must play straight and good or he will lose the game, his sacrifices and all rewards or "interest." It might be thought that when he loses he helps the evil spirit and to him goes his sacrifice, but this is not our idea of the game.

The Great Spirit is said to have told the people . . . to play this Bowl Game . . . to satisfy him. It is the Great Spirit's game. It makes him feel good to see his people play. Some say he wants his people to enjoy themselves when they worship.

The game is sacred, for it is the Great Spirit's game. It represents life, to some extent. The sacrifice, the playing straight to win the reward, and the danger of losing--all teach the lesson of love, of sacrifice, and "good" with the fun of a wholesome game.<sup>162</sup>

These words indicate that the game rites were much more than enjoyable activities. Indeed, the rites were a patent allegory of native life and ethics.

### The Huron

Despite the wealth of information left by the Jesuit priests, little is known of the calendric rituals of the Hurons. This is not surprising when it is considered that most of the missionaries' observations were made during the winter, and it was in the warmer months that the majority of these ceremonies were conducted. It must be remembered that the economic stability of the Huron communities rested on an agricultural/trade base. This resulted in a population dispersion during spring and summer, the men travelling back and forth to trade, and the women tending the crops.<sup>163</sup> The missionaries, forced to curtail their proselytising until the end of the trading season, spent the summers in "spiritual exercises" and in collating and recording their observations.<sup>164</sup> As a result, their "Relations" illustrate vividly



those individual crisis rites associated with sickness and death, commonly performed during the winter months, but give scant mention to the annual communal ceremonies of the Huron.

Nevertheless, it is known that the natives of Huronia conducted a Midwinter Ceremony, a Moon and Sun Ceremony, a Green Corn Feast, a Harvest Festival,<sup>165</sup> and possibly also a ceremony in honour of the "first-fruits."<sup>166</sup> Brébeuf<sup>167</sup> refers to a thanksgiving feast but neglects to indicate whether this was a separate ritual or merely a rite performed during some of the previously mentioned ceremonies.

While Sagard<sup>168</sup> recalls that intervillage gambling games were frequently associated with these rituals, it is only in conjunction with the Green Corn Feast that an actual game has been documented. Connelley<sup>169</sup> states that the Wyandot\* concluded this festival with a bowl game, a rite that pitted moiety against moiety. It is worthy to note that, where the Iroquois appointed representatives from each moiety to supervise their rite, the responsibility among the Wyandot fell to one group. Connelley elaborates: "The Wolf clan was not permitted to take sides. It was always the office of this clan to act as the executive power of the tribe and settle all disputes; but a certain portion of the winnings of the successful party was given to the Wolf clan."<sup>170</sup> In considering Brébeuf's<sup>171</sup> comment on the division and supervision of tribal activities, it can be assumed that this power of mediation probably extended beyond the bowl game rite.

The actual function and purpose of the game in the Green Corn Feast is unknown. The fact that the contest terminated the festival, however,

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\*The term "Wyandot" refers specifically to those Huron and Tobacco natives who were forced to abandon their tribal lands following the decimation of the Huron Confederacy by the Iroquois.<sup>172</sup>





seems to infer that it was held in the same esteem as the Fourth Sacred Rite of the Iroquois, and was, in all likelihood, contested for similar reasons, that being to appease and honour a supreme being.

The Hurons conducted a Moon and Sun Ceremony, although there is evidence to suggest that this only occurred at the time of a lunar eclipse.<sup>173</sup> Several scholars infer that a bowl game may have been included in the ritual.<sup>174</sup> Even if this were the case, and the Jesuit missionaries make no mention of it, it is almost certain that the rite was not of a thanksgiving nature, as the ceremony was designed to divert those dangers believed to be associated with the eclipse.

Nothing definite is known about the remaining Huron festivals. In discussing the game of lacrosse, Lahontan noted that "all these games are made only for Feasts. . . ."<sup>175</sup> The word "feast" should not be construed to mean a secular affair. On the contrary, the occasion was probably one of considerable religious import. Although it is doubtful that "all" lacrosse games possessed ceremonial overtones, they certainly played a major role in the mortuary, medicinal and climatic practices of the Huron. On this basis, it is entirely conceivable that the game was also contested during certain annual ceremonies. Spectators at various Huron feasts have estimated that the number of players participating in the associated games of lacrosse ranged anywhere from three hundred to two thousand.<sup>176</sup> Social gatherings of this magnitude simply did not occur. As the majority of Huron lacrosse games were played prior to seed planting and the players were ornamented and painted,<sup>177</sup> there is a strong possibility that the game served as an agricultural rite. Consider too, Perrot's description of the Huron lacrosse field. He states that the goal posts ". . . face to the east



and to the west, to the north and to the south."<sup>178</sup> Apparently one team attempted to score by passing the ball beyond the north or south goal, the other beyond the east or west goal. While the evidence is confusing,\* the game suggests a symbolic contest between the four world quarters--a concept that possesses distinct ritualistic overtones.<sup>179</sup> Although the evidence is flimsy, it is impossible to rule out lacrosse as a supplicatory-fertility rite.

In closing, it should be mentioned that the Hurons and their Algonquian neighbours considered play an integral and natural part of any religious celebration, indigenous or alien. Le Mercier, for instance, wrote of the Ottawa: "They have a grotesque image of black bronze, one foot in height, which was found in the country. . . . There are fixed days for honoring this statue with feasts, games, [and] dances. . . ."<sup>180</sup> His obvious disgust is surpassed only by Dablon's,<sup>181</sup> who was forced to witness a variety of athletic contests between Algonquian and Huron natives during the sacred Christian period of Easter. The inability of the missionaries to accept native practices and their tendency to condemn them, must have increased the difficulty of their vocation.

### The Susquehanna

The Susquehanna or Conestoga resided to the immediate south of the Six Nations. Little is known of them except that they belonged to the same linguistic family as the Iroquois and were probably absorbed into the League in the early Eighteenth Century.<sup>182</sup> Nothing remains of their agricultural festivals although it can be speculated that they were very similar to those

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\*Nicolas Perrot, coureur de bois, trader and government agent, encountered a certain amount of difficulty in recording his observations.



Iroquoian ceremonies previously discussed.

Loskiel,<sup>183</sup> living with them, witnessed an intervillage gambling contest that lasted for eight days. The activity contested on this occasion was a bowl game, and in all likelihood was conducted in conjunction with their Midwinter Festival. Teams were structured on a village basis and included all those in attendance. Before the game commenced and every evening prior to the resumption of play,\* a symbolic sacrifice was offered to those ethereal beings present, by the opposing teams. "This was done by a man going several times round the fire, throwing tobacco\*\* into it, and singing a song. Afterwards the whole company danced."<sup>184</sup>

As in the Iroquoian rite, gambling was associated with this particular contest, and the participants endeavoured to influence the fall of the plum-stones. "The gamblers," writes Loskiel, "distort their features, and if unsuccessful, mutter their displeasure at the dice and the evil spirits who prevent their good fortune."<sup>185</sup>

The actual place and function of the contest in this ceremony remains unknown. If the Iroquoian influence were as strong as it appears, then the bowl game probably functioned as a thanksgiving rite.

### The Cherokee

Despite the considerable amount of literature written on the Cherokees, little has been recorded of their annual ceremonies. Although contact with their linguistic bretheren, particularly the Seneca,<sup>186</sup> was

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\*The Iroquoian Midwinter bowl game was held in the morning, although traditionally it too may have been conducted at night.

\*\*The tobacco employed in the ritual was not the commercial variety but was cultivated solely for this purpose.<sup>187</sup>



common, the Cherokee do not appear to have followed the northern Iroquoian set of calendric rituals. Rather observers speak of only three major ceremonies within this nation--a Corn Planting Ceremony, held in the spring; the Green Corn Thanksgiving Feast of September; and the Great Moon, New Fire or New Year Ceremony conducted in late October. With the exception of hunting contests\* held in association with the Green Corn Thanksgiving Feast and the New Year Ceremony,<sup>188</sup> there is no direct evidence to indicate that game rites occupied a part of any of these ceremonies. Several authors,<sup>189</sup> nevertheless, infer that the game of lacrosse was closely allied with some of these ceremonies.

Certainly the game itself was surrounded by ritual. Players preparing for an upcoming contest entered into a period of training many weeks prior to the game. Throughout this pre-game preparatory period, the players were not only involved in regular scrimmages, but were also subjected to a variety of regulations and taboos. They were forbidden to eat rabbit flesh, frog meat, young birds or animals, sluggish fish, brittle plant foods, hot meals and salt--in short, all foods that were believed capable of impairing the performance of the player. Similarly, they could not touch, or permit their sticks to be handled by an infant or a female, while a player whose wife was pregnant was barred from competition. Taboos of this nature were usually enforced for twenty-eight days prior to the contest. This number in itself is significant in so far as it is a multiple

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\*Two teams of hunters, each scouring the opposite sides of a river, shot as many animals as possible during the day-long hunt. The losing team was expected to prepare the slaughtered game for the ensuing feast. In point of fact, this contest was more an enjoyable, but necessary task, rather than a religious rite.<sup>190</sup>







FIGURE 8

CHEROKEE LACROSSE PLAYER UNDERGOING SCARIFICATION<sup>191</sup>





FIGURE 9

CHEROKEE SCARIFICATION INSTRUMENT<sup>192</sup>

FIGURE 10

"GOING TO WATER"--CHEROKEE LACROSSE PLAYERS<sup>193</sup>





of the two numbers most sacred to the Cherokees<sup>194</sup>--four and seven.\*

During this period, the athletes underwent a series of scarification and water purification rites. Scarification, or blood letting by scratching, was a common Cherokee medical practice. It was also an important purification rite to which all lacrosse players were subjected (Figure 8). The scarifier, illustrated in Figure 9, resembled a short comb, the teeth of which were made of sharpened turkey bone splinters. Athletes were scratched with this implement by a shaman on their arms, legs, breasts, and backs. After the rite each player displayed some three hundred gashes, into which were rubbed specially prepared herbal concoctions.<sup>195</sup> Associated with this ritual was the practice of "going to water." This, too, was a purification rite and one that was closely linked with the Green Corn Thanksgiving Feast.<sup>196</sup> The purpose of the ceremony was to raise the players' souls by successive stages to the seventh upper world. This was accomplished by a series of standardised chants and bodily gestures following which the athletes plunged into a stream and immersed themselves or their playing implements seven times<sup>197</sup> (Figure 10).

Occasionally divinatory beads were used by the shaman during the ritual in an attempt to influence the outcome of the contest. Practices of this nature were extremely common when the opposing team was from another

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\*The number "four" was related to the cardinal points of the compass--the four world quarters. The number "seven" was derived from a combination of the four world quarters and belief in "an above, a below and a here." It was also linked with their concept of heaven--heaven being divided into seven different levels. The number is encountered frequently throughout the Cherokee culture, for example: there were seven Cherokee clans; there were seven bones in the scarification instrument; the water purification rite involved immersing the body and/or the lacrosse stick seven times; and principal formulae had to be repeated seven times.<sup>198</sup>



village.<sup>199</sup> Indeed, Fogelson claims that "rivalry becomes most intense during [intercommunity] Indian ball games which are felt to be primarily contests between rival conjurors with the players as mere pawns."<sup>200</sup> The shaman employed a variety of magico-religious aids in an attempt to bewitch the opposition and bolster the power of his own athletes. In addition to the beads previously mentioned, sacred formulae, herbal potients, fetishes, and the like, were used to "twist the minds"<sup>201</sup> of the opposition and thus prevent their victory. On the other hand, the shaman's own charges were treated in such a way so as to prevent hexing by the rival medicine-man and to provide them with those supernatural aids necessary to ensure success.<sup>202</sup>

The evening prior to the contest was spent in dancing. This pre-game dance involved both the men and the women and continued throughout the night. It was periodically interrupted to permit the athletes to "go to water." The Ball Dance ". . . is probably the most important and most revered of the Cherokee Dances,"<sup>203</sup> and was generally considered as a celebration dance. The concept of conducting a victory dance before, rather than after the game was related to the general practice of attempting to predetermine the course of play. Not only did the dance serve to secure the favour of divine beings, but also allowed the participants to project their combined metaphysical powers against the opposition. The dance itself has been well described by numerous authors<sup>204</sup> and will not be elaborated upon here. The reader's attention is, however, directed to Figure 11, which depicts seven women and seven athletes involved in such a dance.

The game, played following the Ball Dance, saw the competitors and shamans carrying and employing numerous play-influencing aids.<sup>205</sup> A feast







FIGURE 11

CHEROKEE PRE-GAME DANCE<sup>206</sup>

was held after the contest during which the players "went to water" for the last time before dispersing.

Just what place the game occupied in the Cherokee ceremonial calendar is unclear. It is known that in most Cherokee settlements the lacrosse field was located alongside the council house. This structure was usually situated in the heart of the community and in addition to serving as a political centre, also acted as a "temple" for all major ceremonies--including those associated with the ball game.<sup>207</sup> In the "temple" burned the sacred fire so prominent in the New Year Ceremony. The importance of the game in this culture is indicated by the fact that the towns of the early Cherokees were ". . . always built on the level bottom lands by the



river in order that the people might have smooth ground for their . . . ballplays and might be able to go down to water during the dance."<sup>208</sup>

Spence<sup>209</sup> maintains that the game possessed religio-astronomical overtones. Tribal mythology seems to lend credence to this claim.

Some old people say that the moon is a ball which was thrown up against the sky in a game a long time ago. They say that two towns were playing against each other, but one of them had the best runners and had almost won the game, when the leader of the other side picked up the ball with his hand--a thing that is not allowed in the game--and tried to throw it to the goal, but it struck against the solid sky vault and was fastened there, to remind players never to cheat. When the moon looks small and pale it is because some one has handled the ball unfairly. . . .<sup>210</sup>

For this reason, the game, traditionally, was only played during the autumn at the period of a full moon--"the moon presides over . . . [the ball play] as a tutelary spirit."<sup>211</sup> It seems feasible that the game once served as a rite during the most important Cherokee ceremony involving the moon, that of the New Year or Great Moon Ceremony. Although this ceremony can be viewed as a ritual of intensification during which debts were cancelled, grudges forgotten, and crimes pardoned, it served primarily as an occasion of thanksgiving and supplication. Thanks were afforded to various supernatural beings for the year past and assistance sought of them for the future.

Apparently the Great Spirit was believed to oversee every game. This is evidenced by the numerous pre-game cautions issued to the athletes to play fairly lest this being be offended.<sup>212</sup> As the Great Spirit was the presiding entity during the Green Corn Thanksgiving Feast, the game may well have formed a part of this ritual also. The purification rites noted in the game of lacrosse were also an integral part of the Green Corn Feast.<sup>213</sup> Of greater interest is the fact that the betting associated with the game was



TABLE XI

## THANKSGIVING/SUPPLICATORY GAMES AND CEREMONIES OF THE HURON, SUSQUEHANNA AND CHEROKEE

Tribe	Ceremony	Game	Contestants	Spirit(s) Involved	Remarks
Huron	Corn Planting?	Lacrosse	Men v men (Intervillage)	?	Pre-game preparations
	Green Corn	Bowl game	Men and women? (Intertribe)	Great Spirit?	Gambling
Susquehanna	Midwinter	Bowl game	Men v men (Intervillage)	Great Spirit?	a. Gambling b. Aids to influence game
Cherokee	Green Corn?	Lacrosse	Men v men (Intervillage)	Great Spirit	a. Gambling b. Aids to influence game c. Pre-game preparations d. Divination
	New Year?	Lacrosse	Men v men (Intervillage)	Moon	a. Gambling b. Aids to influence game c. Pre-game preparations d. Divination





believed to be under the direct supervision of the Great Spirit. This relationship is probably more than coincidental as the same belief was held by the northern Iroquoians when they gambled on the bowl game at the time of their Green Corn Dance.

It can be stated in summary that although the evidence is tenuous, the game of lacrosse may have been associated with the Cherokees' Green Corn Thanksgiving Feast and probably served, in time past, as a thanksgiving/supplicatory rite in their New Year Ceremony. There is no evidence to suggest that it, or any other game, occupied a place in their Corn Planting Ceremony.

#### The Powhatan

Virtually nothing is known of the festivals of the Powhatan, although these people are believed to have scheduled ceremonies to correspond with the return of the migratory fowls and the ripening of certain natural fruits. Beverley<sup>214</sup> indicates that rituals were also conducted during specific phases of their agricultural cycle. The largest of these annual festivals was held at the time of corn-gathering and was, in all likelihood, a thanksgiving harvest festival.

Although Beverley observed that "on this occasion they have their greatest number of pastimes . . ." <sup>215</sup> he neither isolates these pastimes, nor indicates whether they served as rites in the ceremony or were merely contested for social purposes. The Powhatan are known to have engaged in a variety of minor games and pastimes<sup>216</sup> and several major games, such as shinny and/or lacrosse,\* football and the straw or stick game.<sup>217</sup> Whatever

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\*The Powhatan probably played both games. Strachey<sup>218</sup> appears to be referring to a form of shinny when he likens one of their games to "Bandy," while Beverley may be describing lacrosse when he notes that they have ". . . some boisterous plays which are perform'd by running, catching and leaping upon one another."<sup>219</sup>





relationships existed between these activities and the ceremonial practices of this society remain an enigma.

It should be mentioned that as Christianity undermined the sacred beliefs and practices of the Powhatan, so too was it instrumental in modifying many of their secular pursuits. To illustrate, gambling, once commonly associated with most of their recreational activities,<sup>220</sup> is now considered a cardinal sin and no longer tolerated by their descendants.<sup>221</sup>

### The Delaware

A major thanksgiving ceremony was conducted annually by the Delaware in honour of the Great Spirit, the Sun and the Thunderers. This extended ritual began in the early spring, when the first signs of new growth appeared, and continued until mid-summer. As the aim of the ceremony was to secure support for the growth of the crops and to express gratitude for assistance rendered in the past, prayers of thanksgiving and supplication were directed to the presiding entities. To ensure their effectiveness, they were supplemented by activities known to be pleasing to the Great Spirit, the Sun and the Thunderers--activities such as dancing and football. It should be pointed out that there may be a deeper religious symbolism beneath this celebration than is now evident. For example, while the rite served as an occasion to welcome the return of the warm sun and fine weather, it was also believed that if the rituals were incorrectly performed, floods, tornadoes and storms would result. This ceremony thus seems ". . . to have some solstitial significance. . . ." <sup>222</sup>

The rites of the ceremony were duplicated every seven days.\* Each

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\*Originally, the seven-day period was not related to the concept of a week, but rather to the sacred number "seven."



seven-day cycle consisted of prayers in the morning and dances in the evening. The last day before the cycle was to be repeated was given over to a game of football.<sup>223</sup> Thus, over a period of months numerous football games were contested.\*

The games, played between an equal number of men and women,\*\* involved gambling. The most frequently wagered items consisted of ribbons, beads, breastpins, and, as the European influence became greater, money.<sup>224</sup> Prior to each contest, the chief of the ceremonial group sponsoring the rite delivered a sermon. The speech, among other things, requested that while the game be played with reverence, the participants enjoy it, for it was the Great Spirit's intention that the occasion be a happy one. At the same time he cautioned the contestants against drinking before the rite, or using the occasion as an excuse to settle grudges. Scuffling and violence could result in the invalidation of the ritual.

The teams endeavoured to kick a small buckskin ball, stuffed with deer hair, through the two uprights placed at each end of the field.<sup>\*\*\*</sup> Goals were recorded by a scorekeeper who drove a small pointed stick into the ground as each one was scored. The game was declared after one team had accumulated either the twelve or twenty goals previously agreed upon.<sup>225</sup>

When the ball season has reached its end about the close of June, the chief orders the discontinuation of the game. And after the final game he takes the ball and makes a speech saying that the

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\*The contemporary Delaware ceremony consists mainly of dancing and football games. The dances, lasting all night, are held for several evenings prior to the Sunday football game.<sup>226</sup>

\*\*The Delaware word for football is the same as that used in reference to the division of the sexes.<sup>227</sup>

\*\*\*The ball was approximately eight inches in diameter, while the goal posts, eight to nine feet in height, were positioned about four feet apart.



season is now to be closed until next year. At the conclusion of his speech he takes the deer-hair filling out of the ball and cuts the cover in halves.<sup>228</sup>

The contemporary Delaware no longer destroy the ball at the conclusion of their spring ceremony. The earlier practice is believed to have been borrowed from the Shawnee whose ceremony was almost identical to that of the Delaware.<sup>229</sup>

The other major Delaware ceremony was held in the fall at the time of the full moon.<sup>230</sup> This ritual, conducted in their permanent ceremonial structure, the Big House, was a harvest festival. Although legend records that services of thanksgiving were originally scheduled with every full moon, only the autumn ceremony remains. Lasting for twelve days and twelve nights, the rites were directed to the entire Delaware pantheon, headed by the Great Spirit. It should be borne in mind that the number "twelve," like the number "seven," was held sacred by these people.\* Each day of the festival was believed to lift the participants a stage higher through a series of twelve successive sky levels until they reached the domain of the Great Spirit on the final day.<sup>231</sup>

The overall purpose of the Harvest Festival was to maintain the stability of the Delaware world. To this end, rituals of supplication requesting protection against natural and supernatural catastrophes were intermingled with acts of thanksgiving<sup>232</sup>--the latter being directed primarily to the Great Spirit.<sup>233</sup>

The evenings of the festival were devoted to prayers and dances, while the days were given over to play. Speck notes that "a partly

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\*Mooney<sup>234</sup> claims that this number may have also once been sacred to the Cherokees. Certainly most of their lacrosse games terminated after twelve goals had been scored by one team.



sanctified character is . . . ascribed to . . . [those] games which are permitted during the course of the ceremony."<sup>235</sup> Perhaps because the games do not appear to have been as important in this ceremony as they were on other ritualistic occasions, Speck<sup>236</sup> has paid them scant attention. The fact, however, that only certain games were associated with the function indicates that they were believed to please the ethereal beings present, and thus supplemented the other rites.

Traditionally, two games were played during the autumn festival; the straw or stick game, and the bowl game. Both games were replaced in the ceremony by horse racing and the contemporary Delaware remember little of them. It appears, however, that the straw game was linked with the rites addressed to the Thunderers during the festival,<sup>\*</sup> while the bowl game was considered as the Great Spirit's game. The social and ritual versions of the straw game were probably played the same way, although, lacking direct testimony, this cannot be verified. There is evidence to suggest that some of the gaming implements of the Harvest Festival bowl game differed from those used on social occasions. Normally, bone or fruit-pit dice were employed during social play.<sup>237</sup> However, the ceremonial game was played with mussel shells carved in the shape of horse's heads, tortoises,<sup>\*\*</sup> and other forms now forgotten. These were tossed in a wooden bowl. Points were awarded according to their fall and were recorded with corn kernels or beans.

Although the composition of the Delaware teams remains an enigma,

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\*The Delaware straw game exhibited climatic overtones. This relationship was examined in greater detail in Chapter III.

\*\*The tortoise was seen as the symbol of life, perseverance, longevity and steadfastness. The significance of the other carvings is unknown.<sup>238</sup>





TABLE XII

## THANKSGIVING/SUPPLICATORY GAMES AND CEREMONIES OF THE ALGONQUIAN FAMILY

Tribe	Ceremony	Game	Contestants	Spirit(s) Involved	Remarks
Potawatami	Harvest Festival	Unspecified games	?	?	
Delaware	Spring Ceremony	Football	Men v women	Great Spirit, Thunderers, Sun	Gambling
	Harvest Festival	a. Straw game b. Bowl game	a. ? b. Men v women?	a. Thunderers b. Great Spirit?	b. Gambling, Aids used to in- fluence game
Shawnee	Spring Ceremony	Football	Men v women	Great Spirit?	Gambling?
Nanticoke	Harvest Festival	Straw game? Bowl game?	?	?	Gambling?
			Men v women?	Great Spirit?	
Munsee	Harvest Festival	Straw game? Bowl game?	?	?	Gambling?
			Men v women?	Great Spirit?	
Mahican	Harvest Festival	Straw game? Bowl game?	?	?	Gambling?
			Men v women?	Great Spirit?	



as does the format of the game and the scoring system, it is known that stakes were wagered on the contests and that magico-religious aids were used to influence their outcome.<sup>239</sup>

Detailed studies of similar ceremonies among the Delaware's Algonquian neighbours are lacking. Nevertheless, several authors<sup>240</sup> believe that rites of this nature were probably common to the Harvest Festivals of the Munsee, Nanticoke and Mahican. Certainly the bowl game rite was prominent in the agricultural festivals of the adjacent Iroquoian tribes.

### The Creeks

The Creeks\* divided their year into two parts--a ceremonial section from April to October, and a non-ceremonial section from November to March. The major ritual of the Creek ceremonial year was the Busk Ceremony.\*\* In essence, this consisted of a series of separate, but related rites that began in April and terminated in late July or early August.<sup>241</sup> The disjointed nature of the ceremony has resulted in its various subsections being classified under the rubrics of a New Year Ceremony, a Green Corn Ceremony, and a Harvest Festival. In reality, the Busk included all of these. As the earlier parts of this ceremony--those ushering in the new year--were

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\*All tribes in the Creek Confederacy ultimately adopted the ceremonies of the Coweta, Cocola and Kasihta peoples, or altered their own rituals to agree with them. The term "Creeks," as used in this study, therefore refers to all the natives of the Creek State. Where possible, reference has been given to individual tribes within the alliance.

\*\*The term "Busk" is a western corruption of the Muskogean word "to fast." The practice, suggested by the Great Spirit, was seen as a form of purification and was believed to result in improved spiritual and physical health.<sup>242</sup>



primarily made up of dances, attention has been focused on the culminating portion of the ritual which corresponded with the harvest.

The rites of the ceremony revolved around the Busk ground or the "yard of peace."<sup>243</sup> From the viewpoint of the study, this area itself deserves close investigation. Figures 12 to 14 illustrate various stages in the evolution of the ceremonial square. The ancient structures (Figure 12), according to Bartram, were:

. . . rectangular areas, generally occupying the centre of the town. The Public Square and Rotunda, or Great Winter Council House, stand at the two opposite corners of them. They are generally very extensive, especially in the large, old towns: some of them are from six to nine hundred feet in length, and of proportionate breadth. The area is exactly level, and sunk two, sometimes three feet below the banks or terraces surrounding them, which are occasionally two in number, one behind and above the other, and composed of the earth taken from the area at the time of its formation. These banks or terraces serve the purpose of seats for the spectators. In the centre of this yard or area there is a low circular mound or eminence, in the middle of which stands erect the 'Chunk Pole,' which is a high obelisk four-square pillar declining upwards to an obtuse point. This is of wood, the heart or inward resinous part of a sound pine tree, and is very durable; it is generally from thirty to forty feet in height, and to the top is fastened some object which serves as a mark to shoot at, with arrows or the rifle, at certain appointed times. Near each corner of one end of the yard stands erect a less pole or pillar, about twelve feet high, called a 'slave post,' for the reason that to them are bound the captives condemned to be burnt. . . . I am convinced that the Chunk Yards now or lately in use among the Creeks are of very ancient date, and not the work of the present Indians; although they are now kept in repair by them. . . .<sup>244</sup>

By 1789, when Bartram made his observations, the newer settlements, while still constructed around the ceremonial area, had been modified so that the Great Council House and Public Square filled the open end of the now three-sided chunkee yard (Figure 13). This later structure, however, still displayed a vertical pole in the centre of the yard.

There is little doubt that these courts served many purposes, both secular and sacred. They were, for example, the site of the Creek version



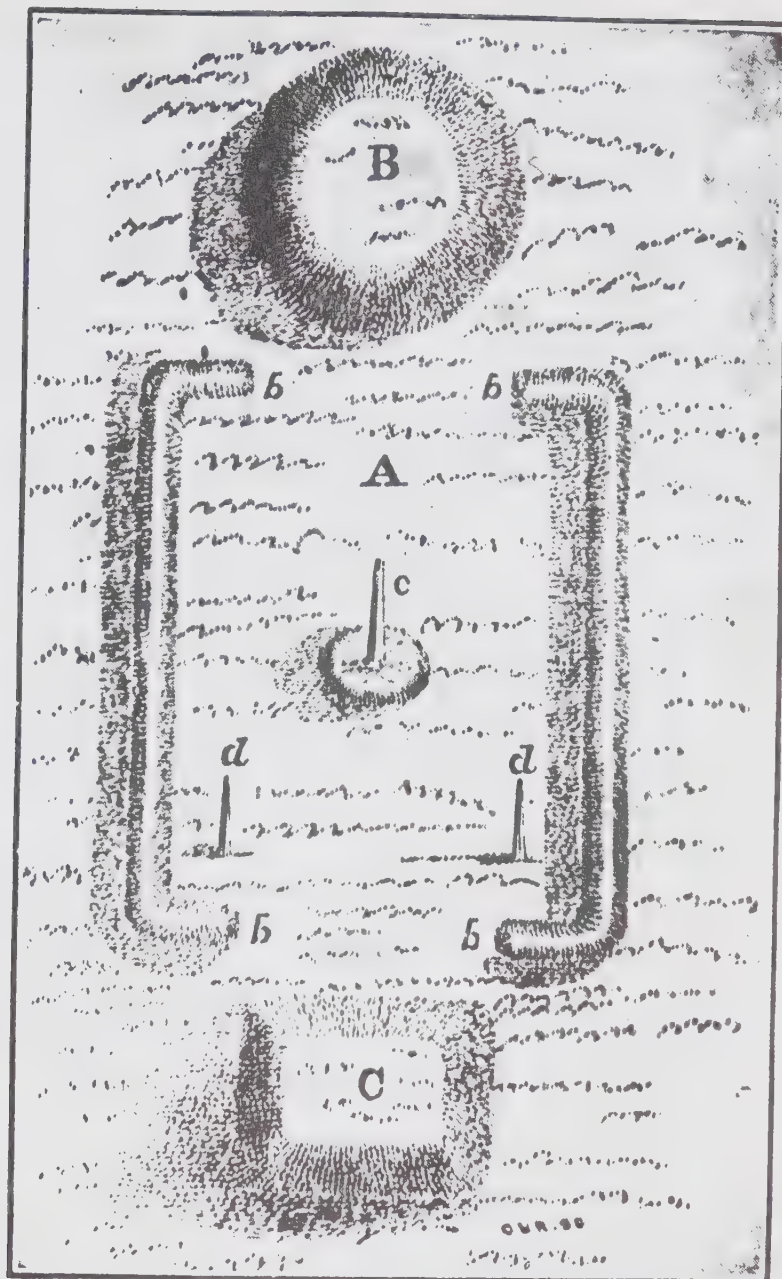


FIGURE 12

## ANCIENT CREEK CEREMONIAL GROUND

- |                  |                               |
|------------------|-------------------------------|
| A. Chunkee Yard  | b. Enclosing Banks            |
| B. Rotunda       | c. Chunkee Pole               |
| C. Public Square | d. Slave Posts <sup>245</sup> |





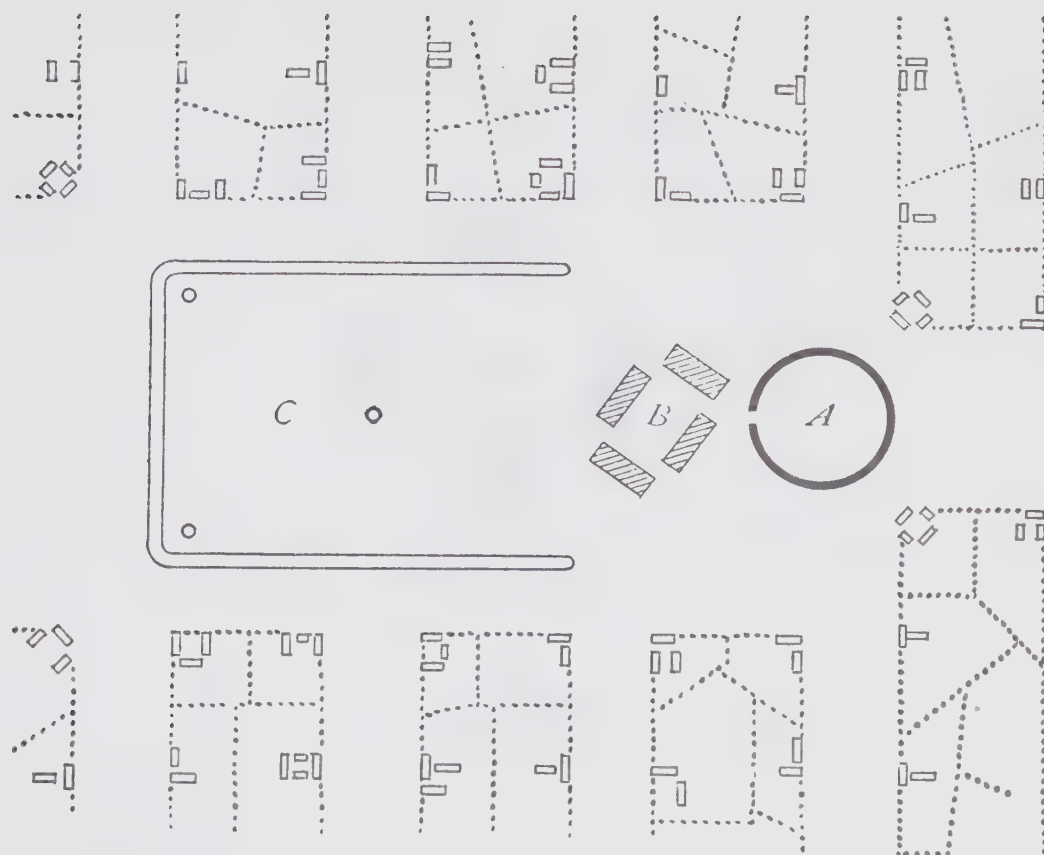


FIGURE 13

## LATE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY CREEK CEREMONIAL GROUND

- A. Rotunda
- B. Public Square
- C. Chunkee Yard<sup>246</sup>

of hoop and pole--the game of chunkee. In this game, a highly polished ball or discoidal-shape stone<sup>247</sup> was rolled along the ground by one player and dart-like poles were cast at it by his opponent. "The stones used in this game were so highly prized that they were kept from generation to generation as town property."<sup>248</sup> Although many writers<sup>249</sup> have alluded to the popularity of the game among the early Creeks, it had virtually disappeared by the late 1800's. Instead, its place had been taken by a game



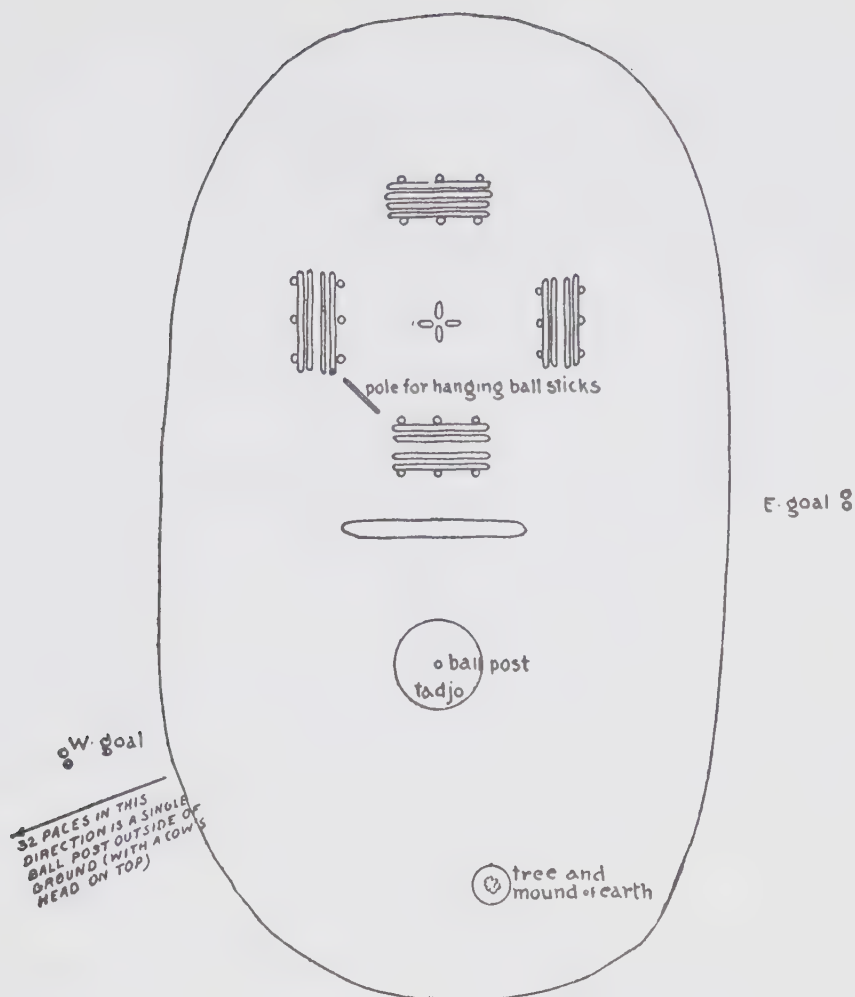


FIGURE 14

CONTEMPORARY CREEK CEREMONIAL OR BUSK GROUND<sup>250</sup>

that literally revolved around the vertical pole positioned in the centre of the chunkee court. This game, known as pole-ball<sup>251</sup> is an integral part of the contemporary Busk Ceremony. Whether the game of chunkee was once similarly linked with the ceremony is questionable, but the sacred location in which it was played and the game's apparent popularity suggests the possibility.<sup>252</sup>

By the turn of the Nineteenth Century, the Creek ceremonial ground,



while retaining its basic characteristics and sacred nature, possessed none of its former grandeur. It no longer occupied the heart of the community; gone was the Great Council House and the slave posts; the earlier four-house structure enclosing the public square had been replaced by four wooden benches; and the terraced walls had given way to a rough encircling ridge of earth. However, the pole-ball post still remained and one new feature had been added--symbolic lacrosse posts, positioned so as to straddle this sacred area (Figure 14).

Lacrosse and pole-ball were symbolic in the eyes of the Creeks in that legend maintains that the founding tribes of the Confederacy, in the course of their migration from the Rocky Mountains to eastern North America, were ". . . supernaturally guided by means of a stick which they set up in the ground and which bent of itself in the direction they were to take. This stick is said to have been a ball stick . . ." <sup>253</sup>---the implement used in both games.

Although the game of pole-ball replaced chunkee as the principle game played in the ceremonial ground, the game itself did not suddenly emerge in the Eighteenth Century. De la Anunciación hints of the game among the Mobile in 1560. He observed that every village possessed a pole and records; "they are very tall, and they have them for their sports." <sup>254</sup> Similarly, Le Moyne who travelled through Florida with Laudonnière in 1564, noted and sketched a game of this nature among the Timucua (Figure 15). Of their game he wrote: "In the middle of an open space is set up a tree some eight or nine fathoms high, with a square frame woven of twigs on the top; . . . this is to be hit with the ball, and he who strikes it first gets a prize." <sup>255</sup> Swanton, <sup>256</sup> furthermore, believes this game to be considerably older than





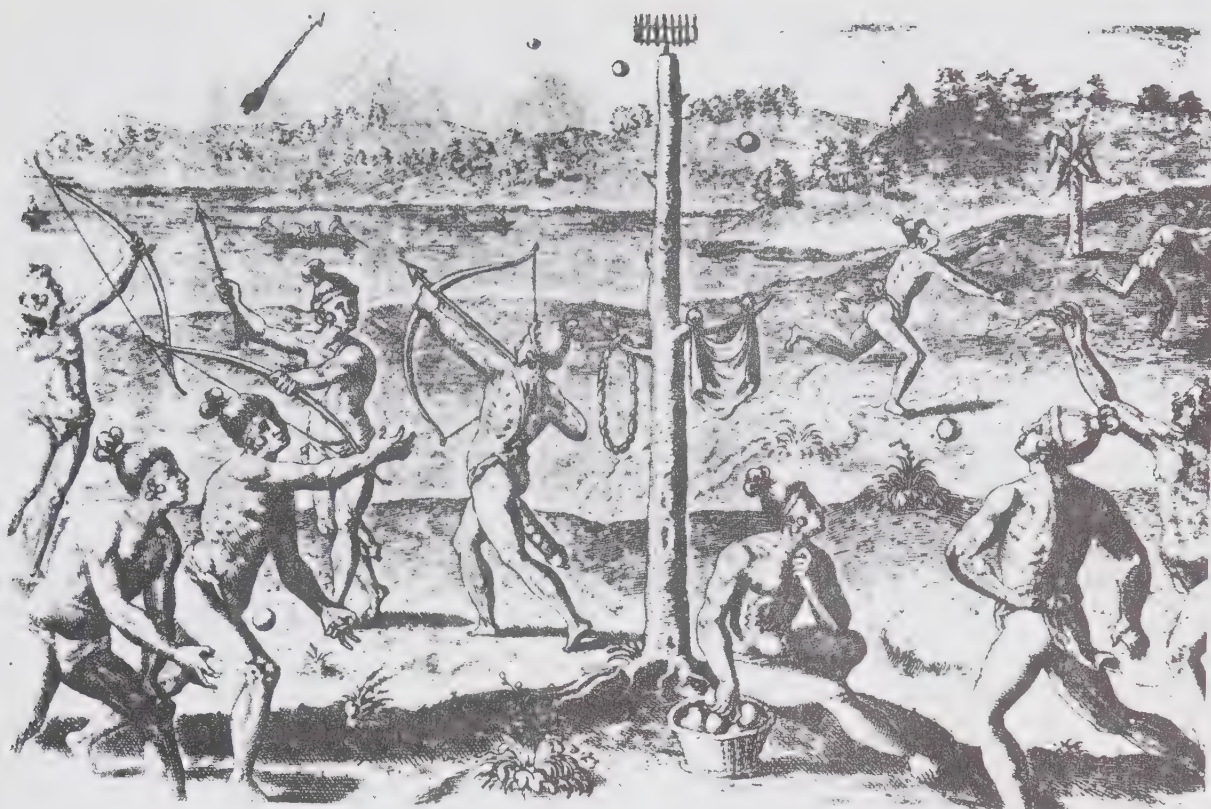


FIGURE 15\*

TIMUCUA GAME OF POLE-BALL<sup>257</sup>

the better known game of lacrosse.

The raising of the ceremonial ball pole was steeped in ritual. The pine tree, from which the pole was cut, was felled in such a manner so as to prevent it touching the ground. After the sap-wood was removed, it was carried to the site and positioned over the scalp of a slain enemy. While this operation was taking place, the men engaged in it abstained from food for seven days and probably went through a medicine ceremony. After the pole was set, they ". . . ran around it four times, shouting. Finally the man who had brought the skull climbed to the top of the pole

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\*This was either a stage in the evolution of the game or a local version of it, as a racquet was not used to project the ball, a fact verified by Laudonnière.<sup>258</sup>





and fixed there a wooden figure, . . . . [an animal skull or a feather]." <sup>259</sup>

The significance of these objects is no longer remembered. There is reason to suspect that the game of pole-ball may have long been associated with the Busk Ceremony but was played on a court near the ceremonial ground, rather than on it. The pole in the centre of the Busk ground symbolised the game and was considered as semi-sacred. Indeed, even today, certain Muskogean groups view the pole and its surrounding area as sacred and erect a separate post nearby in order to play their game. <sup>260</sup>

The culminating ceremony of the Creek Busk occupied from four to seven days. The third day of this ritual ". . . is generally passed in playing ball, either the men's game [lacrosse] being played or the one-pole game [pole-ball] between the men and the women." <sup>261</sup> The first, and most important, day of the ceremony was devoted to rites of purification--the taking of medicine, scarification and "going to water." Slight variations in the order of rites did occur, however. The Tuskegee and Coweta, for example, underwent their purification rites of the second day, following which they played a game of pole-ball. <sup>262</sup> Figure 16 portrays a shaman (squatting behind the rack of ball sticks) preparing the pre-game vomit-inducing "black drink"--the purification medicine. The players, carrying their sticks, can be seen taking the medicine and suffering its after-effects in Figure 17. The Calusa, on the other hand, played pole-ball each afternoon for the first five days of their six-day ceremony. Of their game, played between the men and women, Capron states: "there is nothing restrained or formal about the game. . . . There is fainting and blocking and efforts by the girls to wrest the ball from the boys." <sup>263</sup> Following each game, the women returned to their quarters, for the ceremonial ground





FIGURE 16

CREEK SHAMAN PREPARING THE PRE-GAME "BLACK DRINK"<sup>264</sup>



FIGURE 17

CREEK BALL PLAYERS TAKING MEDICINE<sup>265</sup>







FIGURE 18

CALUSA BALL POLE AND CEREMONIAL GROUND<sup>266</sup>

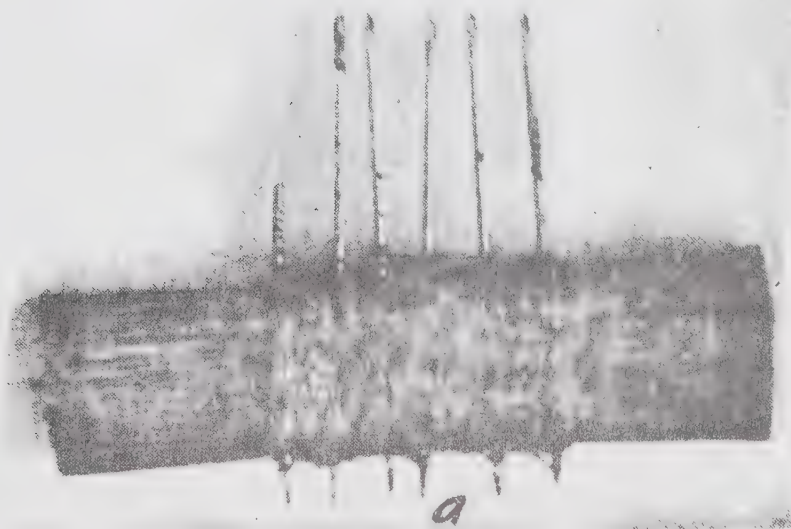


FIGURE 19

SCARIFIER USED IN SEMINOLE BUSK CEREMONY<sup>267</sup>



was out of bounds to them except when they were actively dancing or engaged in the game of pole-ball. Like the northern ceremonies, the Calusa ritual was a time of purification and involved scarification rites and the administration of emetics.

Although the game was played as one of the rites addressed to the Great Spirit, there is evidence to suggest that, at least among the tribes of Florida, it may once have been more formal and possessed astronomical overtones. Moore-Willson states:

One of the most picturesque games enjoyed by the Indians during this [Busk] festival is the dancing around the festal pole. On the night of the full moon, they dance from sunset until sunrise. . . . As the women throw the ball at the pole in the center, the men catch it in their bags that are made around bent sticks. . . .

When the dancing is over, the circle about the pole is perfectly symmetrical, and about ten inches deep, made by the running and dancing.<sup>268</sup>

Further, Culin<sup>269</sup> suggests that the makeshift racquet shown in Figure 20, was symbolic in so far as its two crossed strings represent the four world quarters. To support a celestial association, he points to a game ball, one hemisphere of which is light, the other dark (Figure 21). The contemporary Seminole are unable to elaborate.

Persons failing to attend the final ceremony of the Creek Busk were usually fined a number of game animals. These were brought to the ceremonial square and were devoured in a post-Busk feast. "This feast initiates a series of games between the women and men. . . . This game is played once a week for 3 weeks. . . ." <sup>270</sup> and involved symbolic gambling between the males and females. The women wagered pots of soup, the men, venison. Following the third game, the bets were collected and used as the ingredients for yet another feast--the soup-drinking feast. "This wager having







FIGURE 20

CEREMONIAL ITEMS FROM THE SEMINOLE BUSK<sup>271</sup>

Left of yardstick - Black Drink ingredients

Right of yardstick - a. Prayer reed

b. Pole-ball racquet (well made)

c. Pole-ball racquet (makeshift)

Base of racquets - Tin-can rattles



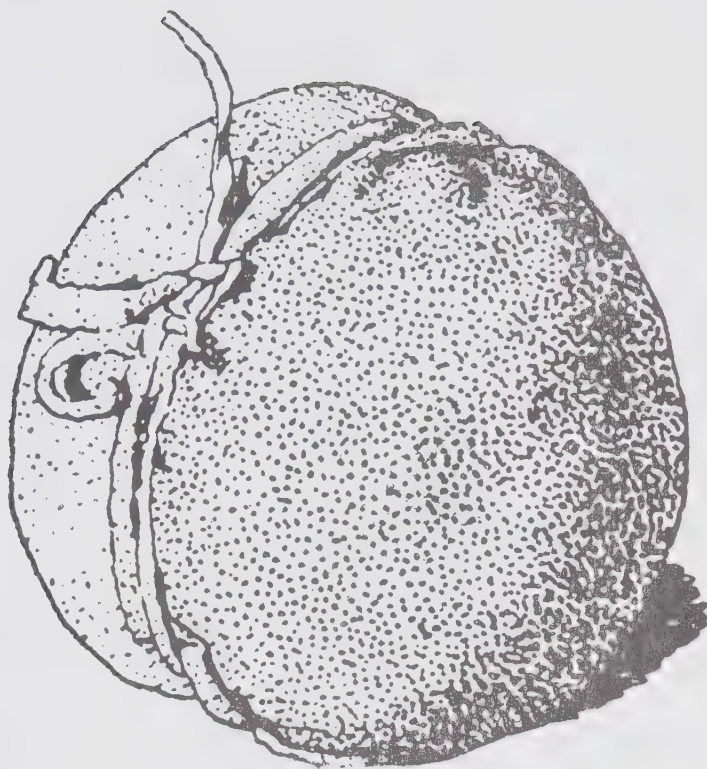


FIGURE 21

SEMINOLE BALL WITH ONE DARK AND ONE LIGHT HEMISPHERE<sup>272</sup>

been concluded another pair lays a wager . . . and the same games and feasts are repeated."<sup>273</sup> The feasts and their accompanying games and dances continued until all the corn had been harvested, usually in October<sup>274</sup>--the end of the ceremonial year.

The game of lacrosse, like pole-ball, was linked with the Busk Ceremony.<sup>275</sup> Unlike the single pole game, however, it was always played on an intercommunity basis during the ritual and furthermore, it does not appear to have been contested as frequently. Played only by the men on these occasions, it involved extensive gambling and pitted the War towns



against the Peace towns. The Creek Confederacy was divided into Red (War) towns and White (Peace) towns. Originally the White towns were made up of the founding Creek tribes and the Red towns, of the absorbed or conquered groups. However, if a township were defeated at lacrosse a certain number of times by another, it adopted the status of its conqueror. Thus Red towns could, and did, become White towns. For this very reason, lacrosse was referred to as the "younger brother to war," for continued defeat on the playing field meant domination and allegiance. Indeed, it was symbolic warfare.<sup>276</sup>

Since the very existence of the town depended on the skill of its lacrosse teams, and the stakes wagered could decidedly influence the economic balance of the community, there is little wonder that the shamans did everything in their power to ensure victory. Like the Cherokee, the Creek players were subjected to a variety of pre-game rites. The night before the contest, the teams moved to the playing area:

. . . advancing as if they were going to war. They danced 4 times [during] the night . . . and took medicine, the women dancing first to be followed by the men brandishing their ball sticks. Each side employed a medicine man who brewed and administered the medicines and scratched all the players, making 4 parallel scratches on their calves about deep enough to draw the blood. He also put medicine on their ball sticks.<sup>277</sup>

On the day of the game, the players, distinguished by feathers worn in their hair,<sup>\*</sup> were painted and bedecked with talismanic objects.<sup>278</sup> Figure 22 clearly illustrates the tails and manes worn by the players during the game. These symbols of speed and strength were linked to either the cougar, the bison, the eagle, the sparrow-hawk, or, later, the horse.<sup>279</sup>

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<sup>\*</sup>The White players wore white crane feathers, and the Red players, eagle feathers.



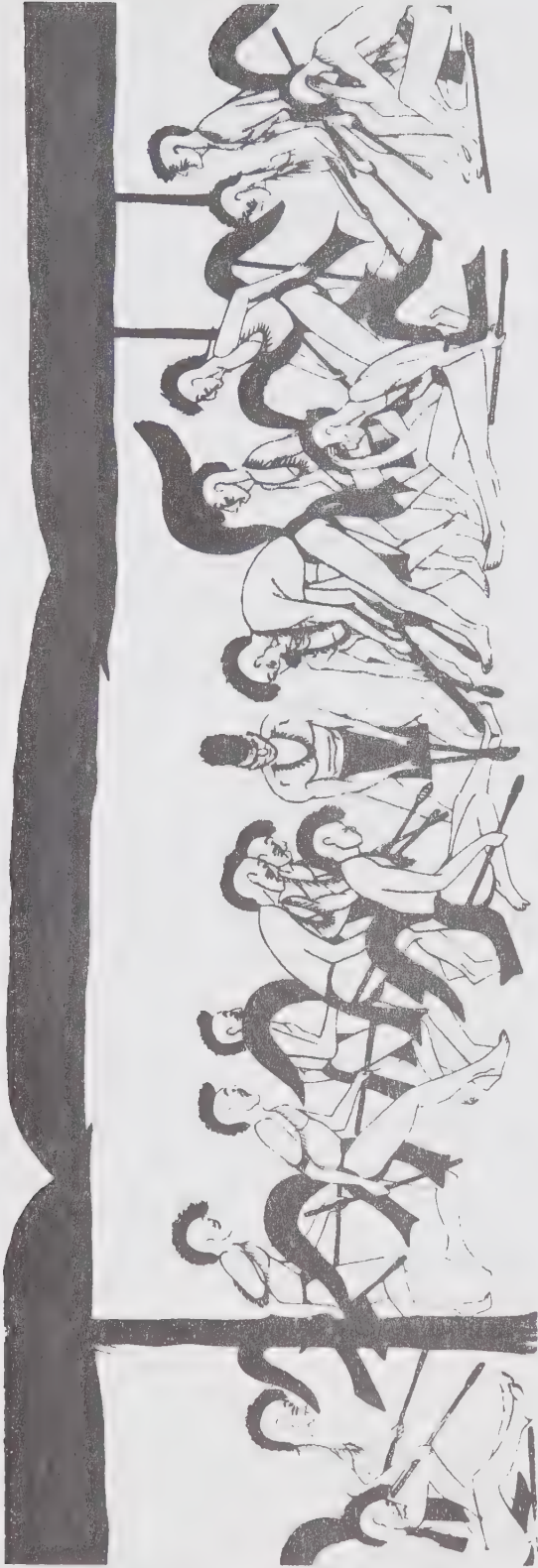


FIGURE 22

CREEK LACROSSE GAME<sup>280</sup>





"During the entire period of play, the doctors continued their conjurations. When it was over, the victorious side ran to their ball post and danced about it. . . ."281

As the Busk Ceremony was, among other things, designed to foster harmony and unity within the Confederacy, the winning team was presented with a bundle of white feathers symbolising peace. The function of the contest was made clear by the fact that a set of symbolic goals straddled the "yard of peace"--the Busk ceremonial ground--indicating that the game was being played under the watchful eyes of the Great Spirit.

The Busk Ceremony corresponded closely to the major annual ceremonies of the other Eastern Culture Area groups.<sup>282</sup> Like the Midwinter Ceremony of the Iroquois, the Busk encompassed rites of thanksgiving and supplication directed towards the entire cosmic hierarchy of the Creeks. It involved agricultural and medicinal rites, purification and unification ceremonies, and, except for murderers, offered amnesty and absolution to those outside the law.<sup>283</sup> Standing above all those beings and forces worshipped during the ceremony, was the figure of the Great Spirit. It was to this entity that universal thanks were offered for the incoming harvest, during the latter portion of the ceremony. These expressions of gratitude were afforded by way of those activities deemed most pleasing to the Creator --activities which included the games of lacrosse and pole-ball.

### The Natchez

One of the strongest chiefdoms in North America was that of the Natchez. Numbering around five thousand at the time of its decline, its members occupied at least nine sites in the vicinity of the present-day city of Natchez, Mississippi. This culture was decimated by the French



and their Choctaw allies in 1731. The survivors were either sold into slavery by the French or sought refuge in the Creek Confederacy. Today not one individual of pure Natchez origin remains. While their political structure has been pieced together in part, information on their social and sacred practices is scanty.<sup>284</sup>

The Natchez were governed by an absolute ruler, a deified mortal, the Great Sun,\* who, with his retainers, lived in the community known as the Great Village. It was around this centre that the ceremonial life of the society revolved.

The Natchez year, which began in March, was divided into thirteen periods based on the appearance of the new moons. Each moon was named after the principal fruit or animal harvested during the period, and was heralded in with a thanksgiving feast.<sup>285</sup> The seventh, or the Great Corn Moon, was the occasion of their most solemn celebration. In essence, it was a harvest festival. Corn, specially grown and harvested for the ceremony, was stored in a newly constructed cane granary located on the outskirts of the Great Village. Surrounding the granary was a series of huts built to house the Great Sun and the nobility throughout the duration of the festival.<sup>286</sup>

The opening day of the ceremony was given over to general thanksgiving dances and prayers. It was on the second day, however, that the

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\*The Natchez possessed distinct hereditary classes, listed below in order of power:

- The Great Sun
- The Little Sun (Great War Chief)
- Suns
- Nobles
- Honoured People
- Stinkards



major rite of the festival was performed--a rite that in some ways resembles the modern-day game of European handball. On this morning:

. . . no person is seen abroad before the Great Sun comes out of his hut . . . and then upon a signal made by the drum, the warriors make their appearance distinguished into two troops, by the feathers which they wear on their heads.\* One of these troops is headed by the Great Sun, and the other by the Chief of War, who begins a new diversion by tossing a ball of deer-skin stuffed with Spanish beard [moss] from one to the other. The warriors quickly take part in the sport, and a violent contest ensues which of the two parties shall drive the ball to the hut of the opposite chief. The diversion generally lasts two hours, and the victors are allowed to wear the feathers of superiority till the following year, or till the next time that they play at the ball. After this the warriors . . . go and bathe. . . .<sup>287</sup>

Dumont,<sup>288</sup> the only other European to have recorded this rite, states that each team was made up of some eight hundred athletes. Although the literature is vague, it appears that the players were from the ranks of the nobility, rather than from the Stinkard or lower class. Each team endeavoured to keep the ball in the air and away from its opposition, all the time moving it in the direction of the opposing chief's hut. .

When it [the ball] is in the air each of the two parties is seen to advance and close together from the same side so tightly together that a pin would have difficulty in passing between them, and when it is ready to fall all immediately raise their arms to receive it, trying at the same time to prevent their comrades from holding it, and by this means keeping this ball in the air without cessation, sending it from one to another, from hand to hand, and from one party to another, until at last one more fortunate or more skillful retains it and gains the prize. . . .<sup>289</sup>

The prize of which Dumont speaks was, on this occasion, a gun and an "ell of Limbourg."<sup>\*\*</sup> His account also infers that only one goal was necessary to secure victory, and that the prize was awarded to the player who scored

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\*The Great Sun's team wore white feathers in their hair and the Great War Chief's team, red feathers.<sup>290</sup>

\*\*Dumont is probably referring to a string of wampum, as Limbourg was the indigenous term for the Natchez currency.



this goal.

It should be pointed out that Dumont, in all probability, did not witness the Harvest Ceremony, as did Le Page, for his observations were made during the summer.<sup>291</sup> It is more likely that he was present at the Natchez Little Corn Ceremony, the third thanksgiving festival of their ceremonial calendar. In any event, both authors imply that the game was played on a number of similar occasions. Certainly it was a popular social pastime among the Natchez youth and women.<sup>292</sup>

The Harvest Festival, and possibly most of the other full-moon ceremonies, was conducted in honour of the Great Sun and his celestial half-brother. The known rites of these rituals, including the ball games, were of a thanksgiving nature and although it cannot now be proven, others probably contained elements of supplication, particularly those directed towards the solar sun.

Of the other games noted among the Natchez--dice, shinny and chunkee<sup>293</sup>--only the latter may have been, in antiquity, of ceremonial significance. Like the Creeks, the Natchez constructed their villages around a central plaza. Adjoining the plaza were two mounds upon which rested the dwelling of the presiding chief, or Sun, and the community temple. It was in this plaza that the game of chunkee was played.<sup>294</sup> As the square frequently served as an extension of the temple, it is possible that the game was also once of religious import. Le Page<sup>295</sup> indicates, however, that by the turn of the Eighteenth Century the game was played only on social occasions and was accompanied by heavy gambling.

As hitherto mentioned, some of the Natchez were able to avoid the wrath of the French and Choctaw by seeking sanctuary among the Creeks. Like





TABLE XIII

## THANKSGIVING/SUPPLICATORY GAMES AND CEREMONIES OF THE CREEK AND NATCHEZ

Tribe	Ceremony	Game	Contestants	Spirit(s) Involved	Remarks
Creeks	Busk ?	Hoop and Pole	Men v men	?	Gambling
	Busk	Pole-Ball	Men v women	Great Spirit	Symbolic gambling
	Busk	Lacrosse	Men v men (Intervillage)	Great Spirit	Pre-game prepar- ations, Gambling, Aids to influence game
Natchez	?	Hoop and Pole	Men v men	?	Gambling
	Little Corn?	Handball	Men v men	Great Sun Solar Sun	Prizes awarded
	Great Corn	Handball	Men v men	Great Sun Solar Sun	Prizes awarded
	Busk (Creek-Natchez)	Pole-Ball	Men v women	Great Spirit	Symbolic gambling





FIGURE 23\*

NATCHEZ CEREMONIAL GROUND AND BALL POLE<sup>296</sup>

other peoples who joined the Creek Confederacy, they were subjected to a process of acculturation, and ultimately adopted the Muskogean culture. It was natural then, that they should not only celebrate the various Creek festivals, but do so in the same manner as their hosts. Figure 23 depicts a ceremonial ground of the Creek-Natchez and the accompanying ball pole used during the rites of the previously discussed Busk Ceremony.

Summary

Material pertaining to the agricultural-fertility rituals of the remaining Eastern Culture Area groups is limited. Although such peoples

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\* A wooden emblem of a fish, which served as a target, has been secured to the top of this post.



as the Chickasaw, Choctaw and Caddo of the south-west are reputed to have scheduled their major annual ceremony to correspond with the maturing of the corn, their rites have remained undocumented.<sup>297</sup> Similarly, nothing definite is known of the festivals of the Siouan peoples or the New England tribes. Nevertheless, isolated observations indicate that ceremonies of this nature were an integral part of their cultures.

Most of these people celebrated the commencement of their New Year, the success of their harvest and possibly also other high points of their agricultural calendar. Whether or not game rites formed a part of the rituals of all these groups remains a mystery. Certainly some tribes included play activities in their ceremonies. Williams, for instance, recorded that the Narraganset had a ". . . Kinde of solemne publike meeting, wherein they lie under the trees, in a kinde of Religious observation, and have a mixture of Devotions and sports: But their chieftest Idoll of all for sport and game, is . . . towards Harvest. . . ." <sup>298</sup> Likewise Hallett, although generalising, states that the Algonquian groups of New England only played certain games ". . . during festivals or religious rites. . . ." <sup>299</sup> The games have, unfortunately, remained undocumented.

Knowing the influence of the Huron, Iroquois and Delaware peoples on the other tribes of the north, it seems probable that the bowl game may also have been employed as a rite by the latter. In a similar fashion, the Chickasaw and Choctaw Nations are known to have played the game of pole-ball, and were undoubtedly aware of its place in the Creek Busk. Adair infers that it may have occupied a similar position in their respective ceremonies. Of a Chickasaw feast, he wrote: "When they have eaten together, they fix in the ground a large pole with a bush tied at the top,



over which they throw a ball. Till the corn is in, they meet there almost every day, and play for venison and cakes, the men against the women; which the old people say they have observed for time out of mind."<sup>300</sup> This series of games and feasts is remarkably similar to the post-Busk gatherings of the Creeks.

The rituals surrounding the game of lacrosse have been discussed in conjunction with the Cherokees and the tribes of the Creek Confederacy. Similar pre-game practices, however, have been observed throughout the Eastern Culture Area. Southern tribes, such as the Choctaw and Chickasaw, engaged in esoteric purification rituals and dances prior to their contests; employed talismanic objects, incantations and medicines to ensure success; and painted and ornamented their athletes.<sup>301</sup> Almost identical practices have been noted as far north as the Massachuset.<sup>302</sup> Preparations of this nature lend strength to the belief that the game may once have been closely linked to certain fertility rites.

The other game that once enjoyed considerable popularity throughout eastern North America, and appears to have possessed ritualistic overtones, was the game of chunkee or hoop and pole. Its relationship to weather control and its role as a medicinal agent have already been noted. Also observed was the fact that all the Muskogean peoples originally played this game in their ceremonial square. This sacred location, furthermore, was the original site of the Cherokee game<sup>303</sup> and those of the little-known Siouan tribes--the Eno, Congaree and Catawba.<sup>304</sup> The possibility of its use by these natives as an agricultural-fertility rite cannot be ruled out.

In conclusion it can be stated that seven games, namely the bowl game, the dice game, football, handball, lacrosse, pole-ball, and the stick or straw





TABLE XIV

## THANKSGIVING/SUPPLICATORY GAMES IN THE FERTILITY

## CEREMONIES OF THE EASTERN CULTURE AREA

I. Bowl Game	II. Chunkee	III. Dice Game	IV. Football	V. Handball
1. <u>Huron</u> Green Corn	1. <u>Creek</u> Busk?	1. <u>Iroquois</u> Maple Sap	1. <u>Delaware</u> Spring	1. <u>Natchez</u> Little Corn? Great Corn
2. <u>Iroquois</u> Midwinter Bush Dance Maple Sap Corn Planting Moon Green Corn Harvest	2. <u>Natchez</u> ?		2. <u>Shawnee</u> Spring	
3. <u>Susquehanna</u> Midwinter	3. <u>Cherokee</u> ?			
4. <u>Delaware</u> Harvest	4. <u>Catawba</u> ?			
5. <u>Mahican</u> Harvest?	5. <u>Congaree</u> ?			
6. <u>Munsee</u> Harvest?	6. <u>Eno</u> ?			
7. <u>Nanticoke</u> Harvest?				



TABLE XIV (continued)

VI. Lacrosse	VII. Pole-Ball	VIII. Straw Game	XIV. Unspecified Games
1. <u>Cherokee</u> Green Corn? New Year?	1. <u>Chickasaw</u> Harvest	1. <u>Delaware</u> Harvest	1. <u>Narraganset</u> Harvest
2. <u>Huron</u> Corn Planting?	2. <u>Choctaw</u> Harvest?	2. <u>Mahican</u> Harvest?	2. <u>Powhatan</u> Harvest
3. <u>Creek</u> Busk	3. <u>Creek</u> Busk	3. <u>Munsee</u> Harvest?	
4. <u>Chickasaw</u> Harvest?	4. <u>Natchez</u> Busk	4. <u>Nanticoke</u> Harvest?	
5. <u>Choctaw</u> Harvest?			



game, served as rites in the fertility ceremonies of the Eastern Woodland tribes. Further, several groups are reputed to have included play activities in their rituals although their games have gone unrecorded. One of these may well have been chunkee or hoop and pole.

With few exceptions, the northern tribes, irrespective of their linguistic affiliation, engaged in passive indoor games during their ceremonies, while the southern groups enjoyed active outdoor games. This resulted, not so much from the climate of the two regions, as from the believed origins of the games, to wit: the Iroquois bowl game, like the Creek games of pole-ball and lacrosse, was associated with the Great Spirit. In general, gambling was linked with most of the game-rites. On occasions such as these, the wagers were considered as quasi-religious, particularly by the northern groups, and given in a spirit of sacrifice. With the exception of lacrosse and handball, the games involved both the adult men and women who competed, male against female, or on sexually integrated moiety/clan structured teams.

The ceremonies and their associated rites were directed to those entities occupying the upper echelons of the Indian cosmos--the Great Spirit, the Moon, the Sun, and the Thunderers--and, in certain cases, to the spirits of the individual trees, plants and fruits. As these entities were known to favour certain play activities, the games were used to secure the support of the powers in question, and to acknowledge their assistance and protection in the past. In particular, these rites of supplication and thanksgiving were designed to ensure the success of the harvest, both natural and cultivated.



FOOTNOTES--CHAPTER V

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<sup>16</sup>Lewis Henry Morgan, League of the Ho-De-No Sau-Nee or Iroquois Vol. I (New Haven: Human Relations Area Files, 1954), p. 63.

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<sup>18</sup>Speck and General, Midwinter Rites, p. 141.

<sup>19</sup>Tooker, The Iroquois Ceremonial, p. 26.

<sup>20</sup>Morgan, League of the Ho-De-No Sau-Nee, Vol. I. p. 299.

<sup>21</sup>Tooker, The Iroquois Ceremonial, pp. 48-49.

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<sup>23</sup>Ibid., pp. 66-74.

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<sup>69</sup>Speck and General, Midwinter Rites, p. 35.

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## CHAPTER VI

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The objectives of this study were firstly, to determine those Eastern Culture Area rituals in which games were employed; secondly, to ascertain the function of the game-rites within the rituals; and thirdly, to determine the types of games associated with these rituals.

Some one hundred and twenty-six different linguistic groups, belonging to the Macro-Siouan and Macro-Algonquian Phyla occupied this culture area. As information relevant to the structured objectives could only be obtained for 32% of their number, the dangers of any statistical treatment or generalisations are apparent. The following interpretations must therefore be considered with this in mind.

An examination of the literature revealed that games were associated with four basic but different types of rituals--ceremonies that revolved around death; ceremonies designed to influence elements of the weather; ceremonies conducted in association with sickness and disease; and ceremonies containing elements of fertility.

Although mortuary services of one form or another were probably conducted by all the eastern tribes, only among the member tribes of the Six Nations and the Huron, Quapaw, Delaware, Shawnee, Nanticoke and Choctaw, is there evidence that the rituals contained game-rites. The games frequently served as the major rites within the ceremonies. Table XV illustrates the distribution of the seven games linked with the mortuary rituals of these





TABLE XV

## DISTRIBUTION OF GAMES IN THE MORTUARY CEREMONIES OF THE EASTERN CULTURE AREA

	Archery	Bowl Game	Dice Game	Footraces	Lacrosse	Moccasin	Wrestling
Pre-burial		+	+			+	+
Burial				+			+
Post-burial		+				+	+
Tenth-day Feast		+					+
Annual Dead Feast						+	+
Condolence & Installation/ Name & Rank Bestowing				+	+		
Festival of the Dead	+						



tribes. It can be seen that more than one-half of the games were associated with the pre-burial or wake ceremony, while the moccasin game, the bowl game and a form of wrestling, or retain-the-object, served in a greater number of ceremonies than did the other games. Table XVI reveals that all seven games were played in honour of the deceased. The moccasin game and the bowl game fulfilled the greatest number of functions and were employed for purposes of divination. Seven tribes used the moccasin game in the course of their ceremonies, six engaged in the bowl game, footraces, lacrosse and wrestling, four in the hand-dice game and one in contests of archery.\*

Unlike many ceremonies of the region, those rites associated with climatic change were performed on a needs basis by the Huron, Quapaw and Caddo. The only standard ceremony noted was the Thunder Ceremony of the Iroquois and even it was normally only conducted when an environmental change was deemed necessary. Of the five games found to possess climatic overtones, only two--lacrosse and hoop and pole--were used by more than one tribe. Hoop and pole, lacrosse and shinny were employed by seven different tribes to promote rain, while the two latter games were also used by six of these tribes to temper the winds. Lacrosse was used for three different purposes, hoop and pole and shinny for two (Table XVII). Whereas the playing of these games was thought to bring about positive climatic conditions, the straw or stick game and the game of ring and pin, when played by the Delaware, were believed to result in adverse weather conditions.

Like the Eastern Woodland climatic rituals, the medicinal ceremonies

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\*See Appendix C. Each game description is followed by a breakdown of the tribes who played the game on social occasions and in conjunction with their mortuary, climatic, medicinal, and fertility ceremonies.



TABLE XVI

## FUNCTIONAL DISTRIBUTION OF EASTERN CULTURE AREA MORTUARY GAME-RITES

	Archery	Bowl Game	Dice Game	Footraces	Lacrosse	Moccasins	Wrestling
To honour deceased and successor	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
To unify dead and living	+						
To remain awake and comfort bereaved		+	+			+	
To distribute gifts and possessions		+		+			+
Divination		+				+	



TABLE XVII

## FUNCTIONAL DISTRIBUTION OF EASTERN CULTURE AREA CLIMATIC GAME-RITES

	Hoop & Pole	Lacrosse	Ring & Pin	Shinny	Straw (Stick) Game
To promote rain	+	+		+	
To promote moderate temperatures	+				
To temper the winds		+		+	
To avert blizzards		+			
Believed to result in inclement weather			+		+





of the region were, for the most part, performed in response to crisis situations. The only natives to use games as part of their curative rites, however, were the members of the Iroquoian linguistic family--the Six Nations, the Huron, the Cherokee, and the Tobacco. The bowl game--which contained elements of divination--and lacrosse, served the greatest number of purposes (Table XVIII), the latter being used by eight tribes, the bowl and the hand-dice game by five tribes. Six groups employed game-rites to prevent sickness and curtail epidemics, while five societies used them to increase the potency of the administered herbal medicines. Only three groups believed the game-rites capable of bringing about a direct cure. All these tribes, nevertheless, considered play activities of this nature to be an integral part of their medicinal practices.

As the peoples of the Eastern Culture Area were primarily agrarian based, it was only natural that their fertility rites should revolve around this aspect of life. The majority of the rituals were directed to those entities believed responsible for overseeing the growth of the crops. The rites of thanksgiving and supplication that constituted these ceremonies frequently contained play activities. The bowl game was by far the most common agricultural game-rite, being employed in seven different ceremonies by some eleven tribes. Lacrosse served as a rite on four separate occasions and is known to have been used by eight different social groups. Although the game of pole-ball was associated only with the latter part of the Creek Busk, it was, during this ceremony, played by approximately 70% of the Muskogean groups studied. The most important fertility ritual, in terms of this investigation, was the Harvest Festival, or its equivalent. Fifty percent of the tribes surveyed included game-rites in the ceremony--games that



TABLE XVIII

## FUNCTIONAL DISTRIBUTION OF EASTERN CULTURE AREA MEDICINAL GAME-RITES

	Bowl Game	Dice Game	Straw Game	Football	Hoop & Pole	Lacrosse	Snow-Snake	Mullasin
Prevent sickness	+			+	+	+	+	
Increase potency of herbal medicines	+	+		+	+	+	+	
Direct cure	+	+	+			+	+	+
Divination	+							



TABLE XIX

DISTRIBUTION OF GAMES IN THE THANKSGIVING/SUPPLICATORY FERTILITY CEREMONIES  
OF THE EASTERN CULTURE AREA

	Howl Game	Dice Game	Lacrosse	Football	Straw Game	Hoop & Pole	Pole-ball	Handball
Midwinter/New Year Ceremony	+		+					
Busk Dance	+							
Maple Sap Ceremony	+	+						
Seed Planting/ Spring Ceremony	+		+	+				
Moon Ceremony	+							
Green Corn/Little Corn Ceremony	+		+					+
Harvest/Busk/Great Corn Ceremony	+		+		+	+	+	+



included the bowl game, lacrosse, the straw or stick game, hoop and pole, handball, and pole-ball (Table XIX). Eight tribes engaged in games during their planting ceremony, seven during their New Year and Green Corn celebrations, five in conjunction with their Moon and Bush Dance rituals, and three at the time of the Maple Sap ceremony. Two games had elements of divination associated with them--the bowl game and lacrosse. While the bowl game was used by the Iroquois to divine the future of their harvest, the Cherokee and the Muskogean tribes engaged in divinatory rites prior to their lacrosse matches in an attempt to ascertain the outcome of the forthcoming contest.

In all, fifteen Eastern Culture Area games possessed ritualistic overtones. The tribes that employed these games in ritual also enjoyed them in a social setting. The forty tribal groups from which information was gathered, revealed that on social occasions, 75% of them engaged in the seven games of physical skill and strategy; 65% in the four games of pure physical skill; 57.5% in the two games of chance; 35% in a game of physical skill and chance; and 32.5% in a game that involved the elements of physical skill, strategy and chance.

It is apparent from Table XX that more tribes played games of physical skill and strategy in conjunction with their mortuary, climatic, medicinal, and fertility ceremonies, than any other game type. Games of pure physical skill were found to rank second in importance, in terms of the number of tribes playing them, in the mortuary and climatic ceremonies of the area, while games of chance were of secondary importance in the region's medicinal and fertility rituals. When, however, the three elements of physical skill, strategy and chance were considered separately and without regard as to whether they served as primary or secondary characteristics (Table XXI), the





TABLE XX

## FUNCTIONAL DISTRIBUTION OF GAME TYPES IN FORTY EASTERN CULTURE AREA SOCIETIES

	Social	Mortuary	Climatic	Medicinal	Fertility
Games of Physical Skill	26 tribes-65% (archery, ring & pin, hoop & pole, footraces)	7 tribes-17.5% (footraces, archery)	6 tribes-15% (hoop & pole, ring & pin)	4 tribes-10% (hoop & pole)	6 tribes-15% (hoop & pole)
Games of Physical Skill & Strategy	30 tribes-75% (football, poleball, wrestling, handball, shinny, lacrosse, snow-snake)	10 tribes-25% (wrestling, lacrosse)	7 tribes-17.5% (lacrosse, shinny)	8 tribes-20% (lacrosse, football, snow-snake)	15 tribes-37.5% (lacrosse, poleball, football, handball)
Games of Physical Skill & Chance	14 tribes-35% (straw or stick game)	---	1 tribe-2.5% (straw or stick game)	1 tribe-2.5% (straw or stick game)	4 tribes-10% (straw or stick game)
Games of Physical Skill, Strategy & Chance	13 tribes-32.5% (moccasin game)	7 tribes-17.5% (moccasin game)	---	1 tribe-2.5% (moccasin game)	---
Games of Chance	23 tribes-57.5% (hand-dice game, bowl game)	6 tribes-15% (hand-dice game, bowl game)	---	5 tribes-12.5% (hand-dice game, bowl game)	11 tribes-27.5% (hand-dice game, bowl game)



TABLE XXI

TRIBAL FREQUENCY AND DISTRIBUTION OF GAMES CONTAINING THE ELEMENTS  
OF PHYSICAL SKILL, STRATEGY AND CHANCE

	Physical Skill	Strategy	Chance
Social	39 tribes 100%	30 tribes 100%	26 tribes 100%
Mortuary	11 tribes approx. 28%	11 tribes approx. 37%	8 tribes approx. 31%
Climatic	9 tribes approx. 23%	7 tribes approx. 23%	1 tribe approx. 4%
Medicinal	8 tribes approx. 21%	8 tribes approx. 27%	5 tribes approx. 19%
Fertility	21 tribes approx. 54%	15 tribes approx. 50%	11 tribes approx. 42%
All rituals	29 tribes approx. 74%	23 tribes approx. 77%	14 tribes approx. 54%



following was found:

1. Games containing an element of strategy were used by a greater percentage of tribes during the course of their medicinal and mortuary ceremonies than were games containing the elements of physical skill and chance.

2. Games containing an element of physical skill were used by a greater percentage of tribes during the course of their fertility ceremonies than were games containing the elements of strategy and chance.

3. Games containing the elements of physical skill and/or strategy were used by a greater percentage of tribes during the course of their climatic rituals than were games containing an element of chance.

This seems to suggest that games possessing the two elements of physical skill and strategy were more closely linked with the rituals of the Eastern Woodland tribes than were games possessing the element of chance. Further examination reveals that during the course of all four rituals, 77% of the tribes who engaged in social games that involved as element of strategy also employed them on ceremonial occasions; 74% of the tribes who participated in social games that involved an element of physical skill employed them in ritual; while only 54% of those tribes who engaged in social games that contained an element of chance used them on ritualistic occasions. It is therefore proposed that, on the basis of the data gathered, the elements of strategy and physical skill were more closely associated with the mortuary, climatic, medicinal, and fertility rituals of the Eastern Culture Area than was the element of chance.

Among the so-called primitive peoples of eastern North America, as among those of other relatively simple societies, the great and enduring



realities of existence included weather, illness, accident, birth and death, victory and defeat in warfare, famine, and the movement of the heavenly bodies. These natives, like primitive and sophisticated peoples everywhere, attempted both to predict and to control those events which governed their lives. To achieve their ends, they made use of a wide variety of games. This aspect of game-playing has, to a large extent, been overlooked or underestimated in all human societies, past and present, literate and pre-literate.









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## APPENDIX A

- I. CULTURE AREAS OF NORTH AMERICA
- II. LOCATION AND INVENTORY OF MACRO-  
SIOUAN AND MACRO-ALGONQUIAN TRIBES

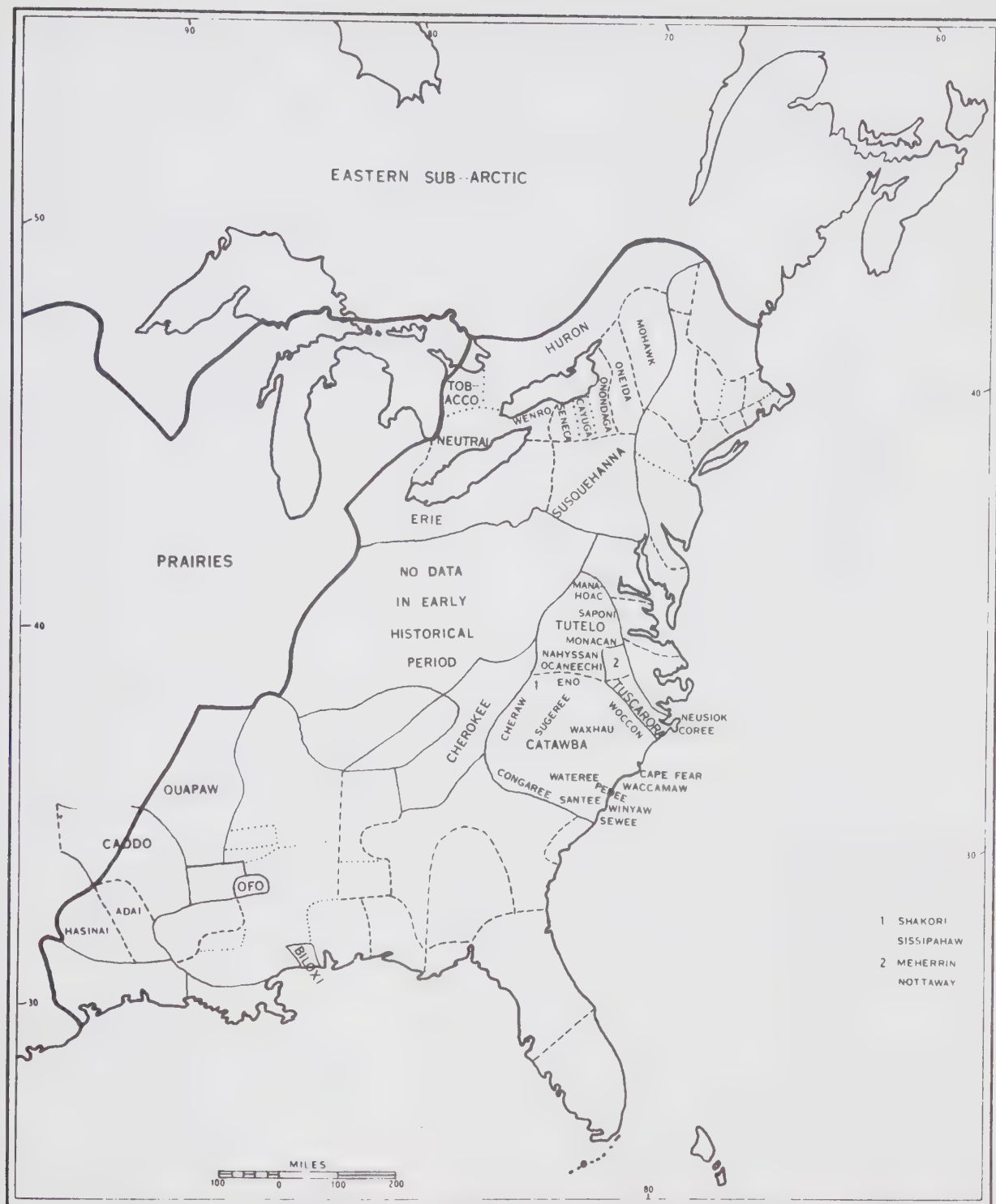






CULTURE AREAS OF NORTH AMERICA<sup>1</sup>



LOCATION OF MACRO-SIOUAN TRIBES<sup>2</sup>



TRIBAL INVENTORY<sup>3</sup>Macro-Siouan PhylumI. Siouan Family

Bilox	Santee
Cape Fear	Saponi
Catawba	Sewee
Cheraw	Shakori
Congaree	Sissipahaw
Eno	Sugeree
Manahoac	Tutelo
Monacan	Waccamaw
Nahyssan	Wateree
Ocaneechi	Waxhau
Ofo	Winyaw
Pedee	Woccon
Quapaw (Arkansas)	

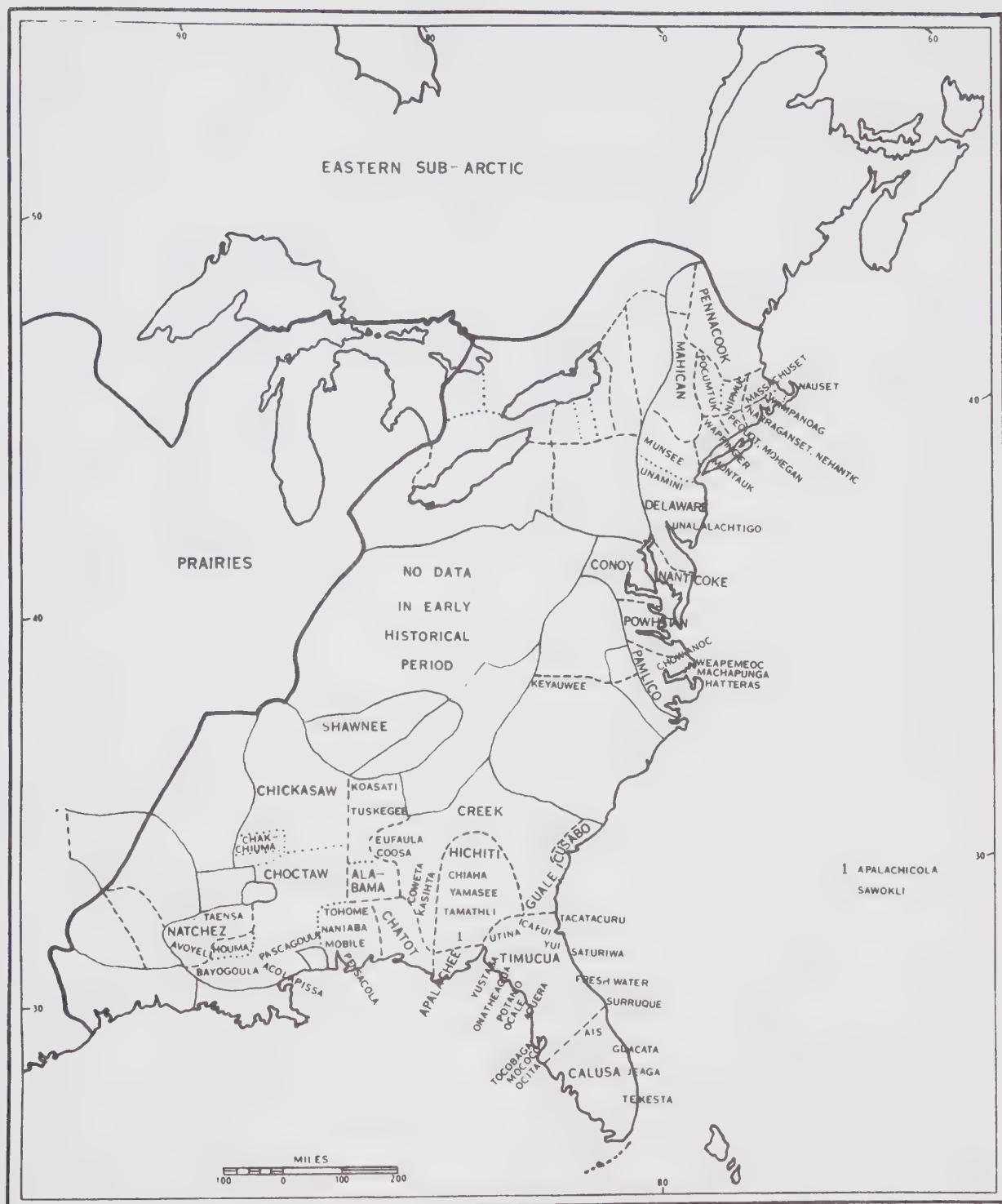
II. Iroquoian Family

Cayuga	Nottoway
Cherokee	Oneida
Coree (?)	Onondaga
Erie	Seneca
Huron	Susquehanna (Conestoga)
Meherrin	Tobacco (Tionontati)
Mohawk	Tuscarora
Neusiok (?)	Wenro
Neutral	

III. Caddoan Family

Adai  
Caddo  
Hasinai





# LOCATION OF MACRO-ALGONQUIAN TRIBES<sup>4</sup>





TRIBAL INVENTORY<sup>5</sup>Macro-Algonquian PhylumI. Muskogean Family

Acolapissa	Fresh Water	Pensacola
Acuera	Guacata	Potano
Ais	Guale	Saturiwa
Alabama	Hichiti	Sawokli
Apalachee	Houma	Seminole
Apalachicola	Icafui	Surruque
Avoyel	Jaega	Tacatacuru
Bayougoula	Kasihta	Taensa
Calusa	Keyauwee	Tamathli
Chakchiuma	Koasati	Tekesta
Chatot	Mobile	Timucua
Chiaha	Mococo	Tocobaga
Chickasaw	Naniaba	Tohome
Choctaw	Natchez	Tuskegee
Coosa	Ocale	Utina
Coweta	Ocita (Pohoy)	Yamasee
Creek (Muskogee)	Onatheaqua	Yui
Cusabo	Pascagoula	Yustaga
Eufaula		

II. Algonquian Family

Chowanoc	Nehantic
Conoy	Nipmuc
Delaware	Pamlico
Hatteras	Pennacook
Machapunga	Pequot
Mahican	Pocumtuk
Massachuset	Powhatan
Mohegan	Shawnee
Montauk	Unalalachtigo
Munsee	Unami
Nanticoke	Wampanoag
Narraganset	Wappinger
Nauset	Weapemeoc



## FOOTNOTES--APPENDIX A

<sup>1</sup>Harold E. Driver, Indians of North America (2nd ed.; Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1969), map 2.

<sup>2</sup>Based on Harold E. Driver, et al., "Indian Tribes of North America," Supplement to the International Journal of American Linguistics, Memoir 9 (Baltimore: Waverly Press, Inc., 1953), map.

<sup>3</sup>Based on Charles Frederick Voegelin and Florence Marie Voegelin, "Map of North American Indian Languages," American Ethnological Society, Revised Publication No. 20 (n.p.: The American Ethnological Society, 1966), map.

Based on Driver, et al., "Indian Tribes of North America," pp. 15-30.

<sup>4</sup>Based on Ibid., map.

<sup>5</sup>Based on Ibid., pp. 15-30.

Based on Voegelin and Voegelin, "North American Indian Languages," map.



## APPENDIX B

### GAME CLASSIFICATION MODEL



## GAME CLASSIFICATION MODEL

In attempting to differentiate between games, and those play form commonly designated as amusements or pastimes, Avedon and Sutton-Smith<sup>1</sup> have concluded that a game situation exists when there is an opposition between forces, which is governed by certain procedures and rules in order to produce a disequibrial outcome.\* Based on the criterion that a game is in essence a contest of powers, they have tentatively structures two major categories of games--viz; games of arbitrary or ascribed power, and games of achieved power.<sup>2</sup>

Games of arbitrary or ascribed power are of the central person type, where the central figure is granted a status that permits him to dictate the course of action. The contest occurs in the participants' attempts to either seize or avoid the position of ascribed power. These primarily childrens' games must be viewed and hence classified in terms of role relationships. The game forms under investigation in this study may best be considered under the rubic of games of achieved power. Games of this nature are viewed in terms of achievement or outcome determinants as the participants, operating from an egalitarian base, endeavour to gain power by skill, luck or strategy.

The nucleus of the model selected to classify the games contained herein, evolved from the writings of Roberts and his contemporaries.<sup>3</sup>

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\*A game is defined in this study as ". . . a recreational activity characterised by: (1) organised play, (2) competition, (3) two or more sides, (4) criteria for determining the winner, and (5) agreed upon rules."<sup>4</sup>





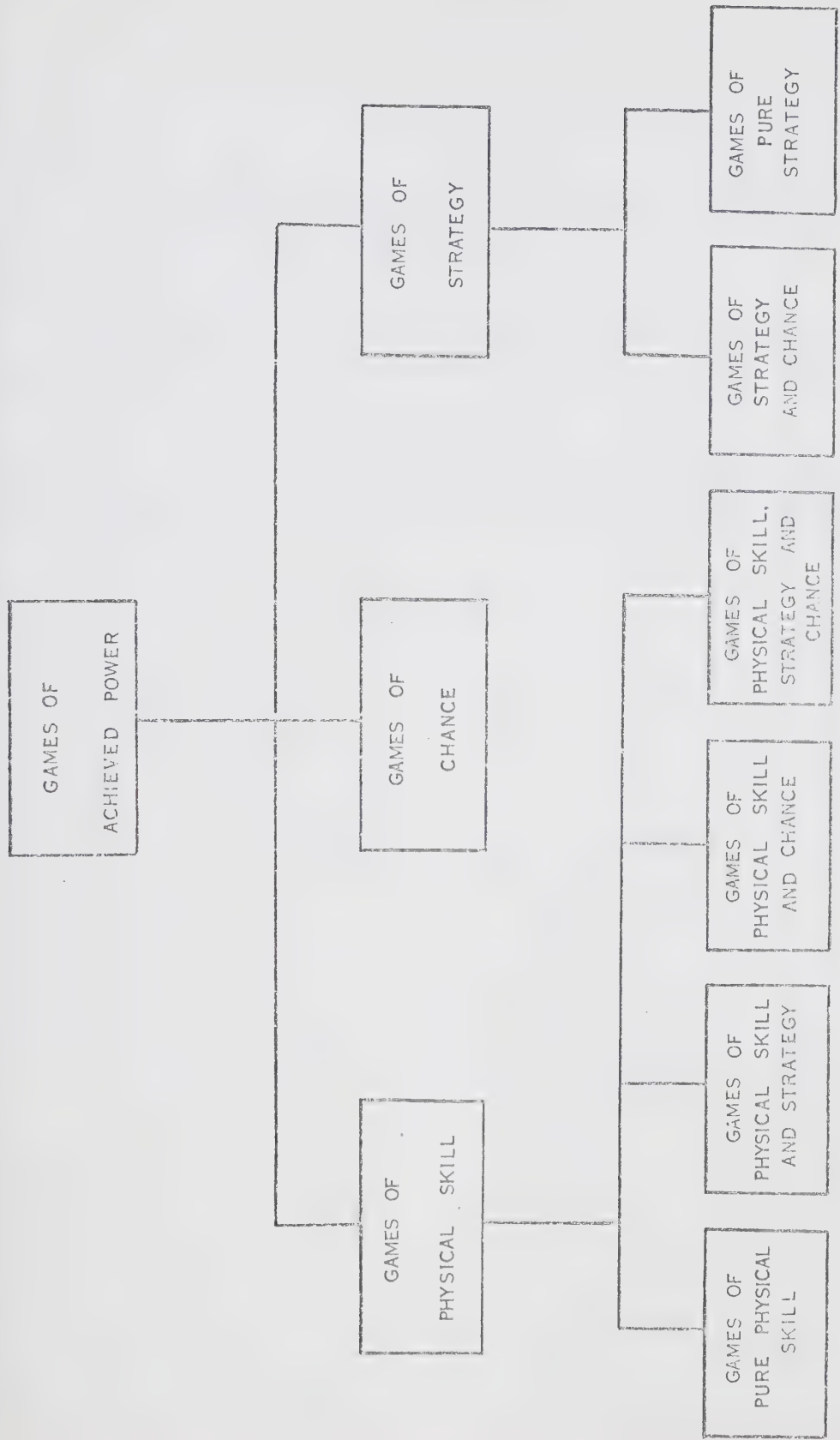
These scholars were of the opinion that a large percentage of the world's play forms could be grouped according to their outcome determinants. On this premise, they isolated three major game categories--games of chance, games of physical skill, and games of strategy--and suggested the likelihood of further subdivisions within these categories.

A series of cross-cultural studies, utilising the Human Relations Area Files, the Cross-Cultural Survey Files and related ethnographic literature, allowed Roberts and Sutton-Smith to expand the basic model. Of the refined typology, they state:

Games [of achieved power] may be grouped into three classes on the basis of outcome attributes: (1) games of physical skill, in which the outcome is determined by the players' motor activities; (2) games of strategy, in which the outcome is determined by rational choices among possible courses of action; and (3) games of chance, in which the outcome is determined by guesses or by some uncontrolled artifact. . . . On the basis of the presence or absence of the attributes of strategy or chance, games of physical skill can be further subdivided into (a) games of pure physical skill where only the defining attribute of physical skill is present . . . (b) games of physical skill and strategy . . . where rational decisions also influence outcomes; (c) games of physical skill and chance . . . where chance is a factor as well as physical skill; and (d) games of physical skill, strategy, and chance . . . where all three defining attributes are present. Games of strategy (which must lack the attribute of physical skill) are subdivided into (a) games of pure strategy . . . where the attribute of chance is absent, and (b) games of strategy and chance . . . where both attributes are present. The category of games of chance is not subdivided, since by definition this class must lack the attributes of physical skill and strategy. . . . The fundamental character of a game appears to be related to the principal defining attribute, whether it be physical skill, strategy, or chance; the attribute distributions within the subdivided classes of physical skill and strategy serve only to add secondary characteristics.<sup>5</sup>

Following is a schematic outline of this model:





STRUCTURE OF THE MODEL EMPLOYED TO  
CLASSIFY GAMES OF ACHIEVED POWER



## FOOTNOTES--APPENDIX B

<sup>1</sup>Elliot M. Avedon and Brian Sutton-Smith, The Study of Games (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1971), p. 7.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 404.

<sup>3</sup>John M. Roberts, Malcolm J. Arth, and Robert R. Bush, "Games in Culture," American Anthropologist, LXI (1959), pp. 597-605.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 597.

<sup>5</sup>John M. Roberts and Brian Sutton-Smith, "Child Training and Game Involvement," Ethnology: An International Journal of Cultural and Social Anthropology, I (April, 1962), pp. 166-167.



APPENDIX C

THE DESCRIPTION, CLASSIFICATION AND DISTRIBUTION  
OF EASTERN CULTURE AREA GAMES  
EMPLOYED IN RITUAL





## THE DESCRIPTION, CLASSIFICATION AND DISTRIBUTION OF EASTERN CULTURE AREA GAMES EMPLOYED IN RITUAL

One of the aims of this study was to determine the types of play activities affiliated with the rituals hitherto discussed. In order to provide the reader with a frame of reference, and to permit the necessary classifications to be made, a concise description of each game associated with ritual was deemed necessary.

For the purpose of organisation, the games are grouped in accordance with those outcome determinants outlined in Appendix B. Selected references have been included for each of the game forms described. Others are contained in the body of the thesis. Included also, following each game description, are the tribes in which the activity has been documented and the occasions on which it was contested. It should be borne in mind that some of these games were undoubtedly also played by many other Eastern Culture Area tribes, but have passed unrecorded, or have been discussed under such titles as "Muskogean," "New England Tribes" or "Iroquois"--headings that encompass a number of individual tribal groups. The lists, therefore, do not pretend to be all inclusive.

### GAMES OF PURE PHYSICAL SKILL

#### Archery

Surprisingly, simple target shooting does not occupy a very conspicuous place among the traditional Indian games of North America. The tribes who engaged in contests of this nature within the Eastern Culture



Area usually shot at stationary targets--bundles of corn-stalks or grass, bark slabs, moccasins, implanted sticks, and the like. Occasionally a moving object, such as a rolling hoop, served as the target, while the youth stalked and attempted to shoot small birds and rodents.

The archery contests of the eastern tribes, unlike those of the prairies and plains, were purely tests of accuracy. No evidence of distance shooting exists. The competitors--men, women and boys--shot as individuals or as members of a team. As gambling was frequently associated with the contest, various charms and incantations were employed to influence its outcome.<sup>1</sup>

#### TRIBAL DISTRIBUTION

	Social	Mortuary	Climatic	Medicinal	Fertility
Siouan Family	Catawba Quapaw				
Iroquoian Family	Cherokee Huron Mohawk Seneca	Huron			
Caddoan Family					
Algonquian Family	Delaware Massachuset Powhatan				
Muskogean Family	Creek Timucua				

#### Footraces

Despite the number of references to footracing, little is known of the actual contests in terms of number, age and sex of the competitors, length of the race, and so on. Impromptu races were undoubtedly common



between the children, and organised competitions have been noted among all linguistic families. Most of these contests were probably distance or endurance events, covering many miles and sometimes lasting for several days.<sup>2</sup> Although women occasionally competed, either against each other or against the males, events of this nature were the exception rather than the rule. During intertribal contests, the participants were always male. Morgan<sup>3</sup> noted that competitions between the member tribes of the Iroquoian Confederacy always saw the best male runners from each tribe competing. In preparation for these contests, the athletes underwent an extensive period of pre-race training and attired themselves for the race as if they were to engage in a game of lacrosse.<sup>4</sup>

As with most other play activities, betting and prizes gave impetus to the contest. The kick-ball (or kick-stick) races, so popular among the south-western tribes of North America, have not been noted in the Eastern Culture Area.

#### TRIBAL DISTRIBUTION

	Social	Mortuary	Climatic	Medicinal	Fertility
Siouan Family	Quapaw	Quapaw			
Iroquoian Family	Cayuga Cherokee Mohawk Oneida Onondaga Seneca Tobacco	Cayuga  Mohawk Oneida Onondaga Seneca			
Caddoan Family	Caddo				
Algonquian Family	Massachuset Powhatan				



	Social	Mortuary	Climatic	Medicinal	Fertility
Muskogean Family	Chickasaw Choctaw Creeks Seminole Timucua				

### Hoop and Pole (Chunkee)

This game has been documented throughout the Eastern Culture Area. It consisted essentially of throwing a spear or pole-like object at, or through, a rolling ring. Scores were determined by the way in which the pole fell in relation to the target. The game is remarkable for the wide diversity in the form of the implements employed, as well as in the method of play.

The northern Macro-Algonquian tribes and the south-western and northern Macro-Siouan tribes employed wooden hoops, while the remaining tribes of this culture area used stone rings. With the exception of the Natchez and their adjoining Caddoan neighbours, whose throwing sticks were complicated with cross-bars, the missiles employed in the game were simple straight shafts.

The game appears to have been a male dominated activity as there is no record of women participating. The number of players varied from two upwards, although two seems to have been the primal number. Among the northern tribes, the hoop was rolled between two parallel lines of contestants, who cast their implements at it as it rolled between them. The southern tribes, particularly those who employed the round chunkee stone, normally rolled the ring away from the players, who were forced to pursue the rolling object in order to throw their darts. It was among these Muskogean peoples





that the elaborately prepared playing areas, or "chunk yards," have been found. The Creeks, for example, constructed large enclosed courts with sloping sides, on which the spectators could be seated. Like most Indian contests, the game of hoop and pole involved gambling. The items most frequently wagered on the outcome of this game were the gaming implements themselves--a practice rare on other occasions.<sup>5</sup>

#### TRIBAL DISTRIBUTION

	Social	Mortuary	Climatic	Medicinal	Fertility
Siouan Family	Catawba Congaree Eno Quapaw				Catawba Congaree Eno
Iroquoian Family	Cayuga Cherokee Mohawk Onondaga Seneca Tuscarora		Cayuga  Mohawk Onondaga Seneca	Cayuga  Mohawk Onondaga Seneca	Cherokee
Caddoan Family	Caddo		Caddo		
Algonquian Family	Delaware Powhatan				
Muskogean Family	Bayougoula Chickasaw Choctaw Creek Cusabo Guale Houma Natchez Seminole				Creek      Natchez

#### Ring and Pin

The game of ring and pin was popular among the inhabitants of the northern sector of the Eastern Culture Area. The playing implement consisted



of one or a number of hollow animal bones attached by a piece of twine to a sharpened stick or bone pin. Although strings of imbricated phalangeal bones were most common in this area, balls of twigs, leaves and hair have also been noted. The pin was held with the point uppermost and the bone(s) or ball swung into the air in such a fashion so as to impale it upon the pin attached to the other end of the thong.

The game was played both for stakes by the adults and as a child's amusement. The method of scoring is doubtful, and probably varied from tribe to tribe. In general, however, it is believed that when points were awarded, and this was not always the case, they were done so on the basis of either the number of objects impaled (where more than one bone was attached to the thong), or, if the bone had more than one hole in it, according to the area of impalement. A series of consecutive unsuccessful attempts, usually three, either eliminated the player from that round, or from the game entirely.<sup>6</sup>

#### TRIBAL DISTRIBUTION

	Social	Mortuary	Climatic	Medicinal	Fertility
Siouan Family					
Iroquoian Family	Huron Seneca				
Caddoan Family					
Algonquian Family	Delaware		Delaware		
Muskogean Family					



## FUNCTIONAL DISTRIBUTION OF GAMES OF PURE PHYSICAL SKILL

	Social	Mortuary	Climatic	Medicinal	Fertility
Bayougoula, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Cusabo, Guale, Houma, Massachusset, Powhatan, Seminole, Timucua, Tobacco (11)	+				
Huron, Oneida, Quapaw (3)	+	+			
Catawba, Cherokee, Congaree, Creek, Eno, Natchez (6)	+				+
Caddo, Delaware (2)	+		+		
Cayuga, Mohawk, Onondaga, Seneca (4)	+	+	+	+	
Total Societies	26	7	6	4	6



## GAMES OF PHYSICAL SKILL AND STRATEGY

Football

Although various versions of football have been observed throughout the Eastern Culture Area, the game appears to have been more popular among the Iroquoian and northern Algonquian linguistic groups. Nowhere did it rival the popularity of lacrosse. The game was played by both sexes, either separately or against each other.<sup>7</sup> In the case of the latter, the female team was usually strengthened by the inclusion of one or two males in the side. Although Hallett<sup>8</sup> reports that certain New England tribes attempted to keep the ball in the air as long as possible by kicking it upward, most tribes endeavoured to project the ball through their opponent's goal. The goals were placed anywhere up to a mile apart and team numbers, except on certain ritualistic occasions, appear to have been unrestricted. Side boundaries and field positions--with the possible exception of a goalkeeper<sup>9</sup>--were virtually non-existent. Rules were few, governing only the method of scoring and the means of propelling the ball. Normally, only the feet could be used for this purpose. Of the Massachuset game, Wood wrote:

Their goals be a mile long, placed on the sands, which are even as a board; their ball is no bigger than a hand-ball, which sometimes they mount in the air with their naked feet, sometimes it is swayed by the multitude, sometimes also it is two days before they get a goal; then they mark the ground they win and begin there the next day. Before they come to this sport they paint themselves . . . . It is most delightful to see them play in smaller companies, when men may view their swift footmanship, their curious tossings of their ball, their flouncing into the water [and] their lubber-like wrestling . . . .<sup>10</sup>

There existed a curious form of football among some of the southern tribes. It was played only on intratribal social occasions, and pitted the men against the women. The object of the contest was to propel the ball





through the opponent's goal. One team was permitted to use their hands or a lacrosse stick, while the other team was forced to use only the feet. The regulations varied from tribe to tribe--in some areas the women used their feet, in other areas they used a racquet or their hands. Although this game was not played on an intertribal basis, like the other versions of football, it involved gambling.<sup>11</sup>

#### TRIBAL DISTRIBUTION

	Social	Mortuary	Climatic	Medicinal	Fertility
Siouan Family	Catawba				
Iroquoian Family	Cayuga Cherokee Huron Mohawk Onondaga Seneca Tobacco			Cayuga  Mohawk Onondaga Seneca	
Caddoan Family					
Algonquian Family	Delaware Massachuset Narraganset Powhatan Shawnee				Delaware    Shawnee
Muskogean Family	Chickasaw Creek				

#### Handball

Many examples exist of Eastern Culture Area ball games being played where certain athletes--usually the women--were permitted to use their hands, while their opponents employed their feet, sticks or racquets. Ball games in which the players could use only hands are rare and have only been documented within three tribal groups. Two of these, the Choctaw and Cherokee,



appeared to have played this type of game solely on social occasions with the men competing against the women.<sup>12</sup> Only among the Natchez did the game of handball enjoy any degree of popularity.

A large deer-skin ball filled with moss was thrown amidst the assembled players by a chief and the contest began. Each team, which Dumont<sup>13</sup> estimated to be comprised of some eight hundred warriors, struggled for possession of the ball and endeavoured, through a combination of passing and running, to move it in the direction of their opponents' goal--in this instance, the hut of an opposing chief--in an attempt to touch it. The number of goals required to secure victory and the size of the playing area have been lost in obscurity. Although rules appear to have been few, there was apparently a regulation governing a ball which had touched the ground. What measures were taken when this occurred, however, are unknown. This game was also played by the Natchez women but separately from the men.<sup>14</sup> Although gambling has not been noted in conjunction with the contest, prizes were commonly awarded to the victorious team by the chief sponsoring the game.

#### TRIBAL DISTRIBUTION

	Social	Mertuary	Climatic	Medicinal	Fertility
Siouan Family					
Iroquoian Family	Cherokee				
Caddoan Family					
Algonquian Family					
Muskogean Family	Choctaw Natchez				Natchez



Lacrosse

The game of lacrosse has probably received more ethnographic attention than any other Eastern Culture Area game. Although primarily a male game, it was sometimes played by the women, either separately or against the men. The game may be divided into two distinct types--those in which a single racquet was used and those in which two racquets were employed. The latter version was peculiar to the south-eastern Muskogean tribes and a few of their adjacent Algonquian, Siouan and Iroquoian neighbours.

The lacrosse ball was occasionally made of wood, but more frequently of buckskin stuffed with hair. The goals were either two sets of posts erected at the extremities of the field--sometimes with a cross-bar at the top--between which the ball had to be driven, or a single post at each end of the field, beyond which the ball had to be passed. The length of the field appears to have been determined only by the availability of a suitable playing area. Side boundaries were generally non-existent, and, except for the fact that the ball could not be touched by the hand, rules were few.

In general then, each team endeavoured, through a combination of passing, running and throwing, to direct the ball at, under, or through their respective goal(s) and to prevent the opposing team from doing likewise. The number of goals scored by each team was recorded and a victor declared.

Accepting the fact that there were different ways of starting a game, and that methods of scoring a goal varied, the following account is typical of many recorded by eyewitnesses:

The ball is tossed into the air in the center of the field. As soon as it descends it is caught with the ball stick by one of the players, when he immediately sets out at full speed towards the opposite goal. If . . . intercepted by an opponent, he throws the ball in the direction of one of his own side, who takes up the race.



Should the ball carrier . . . reach the opposite goal, it is necessary for him to throw the ball so that it touches the post. This is always a difficult matter, because . . . [the] guards may intercept it and throw it back into the field.<sup>15</sup>

Although the size of teams varied considerably, ranging from four to several thousand players,<sup>16</sup> there is evidence to suggest that a division of labour on the playing field did occur when the number of players was small.<sup>17</sup> Lacrosse was played on both an intra- and intertribal basis and was an occasion of extensive gambling. To this end a variety of pre-game purification rites and magico-religious aids were employed to influence the outcome of the contest.<sup>18</sup>

#### TRIBAL DISTRIBUTION

	Social	Mortuary	Climatic	Medicinal	Fertility
Siouan Family	Catawba				
Iroquoian Family	Cayuga Cherokee Huron Mohawk Oneida Onondaga Seneca Tobacco	Cayuga  Huron Mohawk Oneida Onondaga Seneca	Cayuga  Huron Mohawk Oneida Onondaga Seneca	Cayuga Cherokee Huron Mohawk Oneida Onondaga Seneca Tobacco	Cherokee Huron
Caddoan Family					
Algonquian Family	Delaware Massachuset Powhatan Shawnee				
Muskogean Family	Alabama Calusa Chickasaw Choctaw Creek Seminole Tuskegee				Alabama  Chickasaw Choctaw Creek Seminole Tuskegee





## Pole-Ball

The game of pole-ball, or single-goal ball game as it was occasionally referred to, has received little ethnographic attention until recently. Because of the lacrosse-like racquet employed in the game, witnesses tended to view it under the rubric of lacrosse. While the game does bear some similarities to lacrosse, it is an entirely different game and from all accounts an ancient one. Le Moyne<sup>19</sup> for example, witnessed this game among the Timucua of Florida in 1564. Strangely enough, this ball game has only been noted among the member tribes of the Muskogean linguistic family. Virtually every community had a pole, some twenty-five to thirty feet in height, implanted in the centre of its ceremonial square ground. Most tribes played the game around this pole, although some viewed the pole and its surroundings as sacred, and raised a separate pole nearby in order to play their games. Normally the men played against the women, although the women were usually permitted to strengthen their forces by selecting two of the better male players. The two teams mingled around the pole and attempted to score points by striking certain sections of the post with the ball. Generally the players carried a lacrosse stick; however, witnesses have reported that on some occasions players employed two racquets, and on others, their hands. Hitchcock provides a lively picture of the game:

The players . . . scatter about as they please. . . . The chief throws the ball up nearly vertically, standing near the pole,--the game has commenced. All rush to seize the ball, men and women pell mell together. One gets it. His party tries to give him an opportunity of throwing it. The opposite party, to embarrass him, rush on him, catch his arm, and in the whirl he loses the ball. Another rush. A woman gets it. . . . She is about to throw it. A ball stick is interposed over her. She sees one of her own side a little way off and tosses the ball to her. The latter catches it and, throwing it instantly, hits the pole. There is a general scream . . . [and] the ball is taken and thrown up as before, and again the play is all life.<sup>20</sup>



Although the number of points necessary for victory and the method of scoring undoubtedly varied from area to area, the following appears common to the various Creek tribes:

. . . on the top of the pole is hung a cow's or horse's skull, or a wooden image such as a fish . . . [or] an eagle. . . . Part way up the pole is a mark and if anyone throws the ball so as to hit the pole above this his or her side scores one, while if it hits the skull or image at the top it scores more, sometimes five. . . . The whole number of points . . . was 20, and scored . . . by sticking ten sticks into the ground and then pulling them out again.<sup>21</sup>

Unlike lacrosse, the game of pole-ball was rarely contested on an intertribal basis. It appears only to have been played between the members of a community on either social or religious occasions.<sup>22</sup> Personal items were not usually wagered on the game, rather the winning team was expected to provide a feast for the vanquished.

#### TRIBAL DISTRIBUTION

	Social	Mortuary	Climatic	Medicinal	Fertility
Siouan Family					
Iroquoian Family					
Caddoan Family					
Algonquian Family					
Muskogean Family	Alabama Calusa Chiaha Chickasaw Choctaw Coosa Coweta Creek Mobile Natchez Seminole Timucua Tuskegee				Alabama Calusa Chiaha Chickasaw Choctaw Coosa Coweta Creek  Natchez Seminole  Tuskegee



Shinny

Shinny, throughout North America, was played by a greater number of tribes than any other ball game. It did not enjoy the same popularity in the Eastern Culture Area, giving way to both lacrosse and football. Although primarily a pastime of the women, males have been observed playing the game, both separately and with or against the females.<sup>23</sup>

The object of the game was to drive a small wooden or buckskin ball beyond the goal posts positioned at each end of the field. Fletcher and La Flesche elaborate:

Two stakes, as goals for the two sides, were set at a considerable distance apart. The players with the ball started from the center. The aim of each player was to drive the ball to the goal of his side, while the players on the opposite side tried to prevent this and to drive the ball to their own goal. The bat used was a stick crooked at one end.<sup>24</sup>

The game sticks, occasionally painted or carved, were invariably curved and flattened or expanded at the striking end. In many ways, they resembled contemporary field-hockey sticks.

As in lacrosse, the ball could not be touched with the hand but had to be struck with the stick. It could, however, be kicked without penalty. Except for the Quapaw, whose field was some three hundred yards long, the dimensions of the playing surface are rarely mentioned. In point of fact, the field was probably determined by the availability of obstacle-free, flat terrain.

Intertribal shinny matches have not been observed within the Eastern Culture Area. Rather, the game tended to be played on an intratribal basis, either between sexes or moieties.<sup>25</sup> Gambling was always associated with the game when it was played by adults, irrespective of whether they were male or female.



## TRIBAL DISTRIBUTION

	Social	Mortuary	Climatic	Medicinal	Fertility
Siouan Family	Catawba Quapaw		Quapaw		
Iroquoian Family	Huron Tobacco Tuscarora				
Caddoan Family					
Algonquian Family	Powhatan				
Muskogean Family	Chickasaw Choctaw Natchez				

Snow Snake

With the exception of the Delaware and Quapaw, this game appears to have been confined to the northern tribes of the Iroquoian linguistic family. The game was played with round or flat rods up to ten feet in length, which were made to slide over the ground, ice or along an artificial trough in the snow. Several different variations of the game have been recorded. Speck elaborates:

[The earliest sticks were] thin hickory sticks which tapered down to a flat notched end. The other end, called "the head," was round and blunt. The players . . . poised the sticks with the forefinger of the right hand in the notch and held them horizontally between the thumb and the other fingers. They were impelled by a motion of the arm so that they would shoot forward . . . into a run-way. The player would start his throw on the run. The object of the contest was to send the sticks as far as possible. The owner and thrower of the stick that went the greatest distance in its flight over the ground from the starting point was the winner. Any number of men could participate and it was played at any time of the year, on smooth ground in summer and on snow in winter.<sup>26</sup>

A later development entailed a square-shaped tapering stick which ended in





a long whiplike tail that could be wound around the hand. The snake was then impelled over the ground or ice with a slinging action. When the game became more popular as a winter activity sometime after 1850:

The whip-like end was done away with and the stick was lengthened to nine feet. . . . Realising that the heavier the head the greater the carrying force, the head, for the first time, was weighted with lead. . . . This type of stick, round in cross section at the head and square tapered toward the tail, was smoothed with sandpaper and polished by rubbing deer tallow into the grain to make it slip more easily over different conditions of snow. An improvement soon arose in the shaping of the body of the stick by making it oval in cross section and rounding the ends. A new method of polishing was discovered by some of the experimenters, whereby the stick was heated over live coals until the sap began to run. Then the stick was further treated by rubbing petroleum, wax, or paraffin into it and laboriously polishing the surface with rags. A smooth and waterproof coating resulted.<sup>27</sup>

The formulae for preparing and finishing the snow-snakes were, and still are, closely guarded individual secrets. Where traditionally various combinations of waxes, oils and herbs were employed to improve the performance of the implements, today shellacs, paints, paraffins and glazes are used.

An ardent player of the snow-game is fully equipped with several slightly different "snakes" and an elaborate collection of patent, natural, and compounded polishes to suit every condition of temperature, humidity, weather, and snow and ice. They are constantly on the watch for new polishes and suggestions. They have a surprising knowledge of any substance or mixture that can be used for a polish.<sup>28</sup>

The game, played either between teams or individuals, usually involved extensive gambling.<sup>29</sup>

#### TRIBAL DISTRIBUTION

	Social	Mortuary	Climatic	Medicinal	Fertility
Siouan Family	Quapaw				
Iroquoian Family	Cayuga Huron Mohawk Onondaga Seneca Tuscarora			Cayuga  Mohawk Onondaga Seneca	



	Social	Mortuary	Climatic	Medicinal	Fertility
Caddoan Family					
Algonquian Family	Delaware				
Muskogean Family					

### Wrestling

It is difficult to determine the popularity of wrestling among the Eastern Woodland tribes. Although spontaneous one-to-one and group-tussling contests were probably common among the youngsters, only the Choctaw are known to have conducted wrestling matches solely on a social basis.<sup>30</sup> The other tribes who engaged in contests of this nature also employed them in conjunction with certain of their mortuary ceremonies. These competitions were a form of "retain-the-object" in which the massed participants struggled to secure possession of a piece of stick, buckskin or string--sometimes greased.<sup>31</sup> Competitions of this nature, which saw the men pitted against men, women against women, involved a combination of wrestling, running, and tackling--in short, any permissible technique the individual considered necessary to accomplish the task at hand. Wagered stakes did not ride on the outcome of the contests in so far as they were normally held to honour the souls of the dead. Prizes were always awarded, however, when the contests were used as a mechanism through which to distribute the possessions of the deceased--the prizes being portions of the decedent's legacy.

### TRIBAL DISTRIBUTION

	Social	Mortuary	Climatic	Medicinal	Fertility
Siouan Family	Quapaw	Quapaw			



	Social	Mortuary	Climatic	Medicinal	Fertility
Iroquoian Family	Huron Seneca	Huron Seneca			
Caddoan Family					
Algonquian Family	Delaware Nanticoke Shawnee	Delaware Nanticoke Shawnee			
Muskogean Family	Choctaw				



## FUNCTIONAL DISTRIBUTION OF GAMES OF PHYSICAL SKILL AND STRATEGY

	Social	Vertuary	Climatic	Medicinal	Fertility
Catawba, Massachuset, Mobile, Narraganset, Powhatan, Timucua, Tuscarora (7)	+				
Quapaw (1)	+	+	+		
Huron (1)	+	+	+	+	+
Cayuga, Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Seneca (5)	+	+	+	+	
Tobacco (1)	+			+	
Cherokee (1)	+			+	+
Delaware, Shawnee (2)	+	+			+
Nanticoke (1)	+	+			
Alabama, Calusa, Chiaha, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Coosa, Coweta, Creek, Natchez, Seminole, Tuskegee(11)	+				+
Total Societies	30	10	7	8	15





## GAMES OF PHYSICAL SKILL AND CHANCE

Stick (Straw) Game

Variations of this game have been observed throughout North America. The principle items used in the Eastern Culture Area game consisted of a bundle of thin sticks, rushes or straws. In general, the game has been poorly described by the early authors, although it does appear that two variations were played in this area. The first, a game of pure chance, was not associated with ritual and will be given only brief consideration here. In this game, some fifty to one hundred straws were randomly divided between the players, and a winner was determined on the basis of the greatest number of straws held, or, if only two were participating, according to an odd or even number.<sup>32</sup> The other version of the game, like the first, was a gambling game. Discussing the activity, Speck writes:

The furnishings of the game are fifty plain straws, smooth sections of bog grass about eight inches in length obtained by cutting the stems between the joints. To this number are fifteen additional [marked] straws. . . . The count value of the marked straws begins at 5 and ends at 75. . . . The object of the game is to throw the straws upon a blanket folded to form a playing table in the middle of the habitation, and to remove the sticks one by one by means of a quill, the thick end of which has been bent into a hook. In removing the straws from the pile the player must avoid stirring the other straws in the slightest degree, to do so causes him to miss and the next player to the right takes his turn. All the straws obtained by each player are kept in a pile, the plain straws counting one point and the marked ones adding their combined values. The winning score is decided upon at the beginning of the game, 100 being the usual goal. The manner of holding the straws is interesting. The entire bundle in which the plain and marked straws are shuffled is held between the palms a little above the blanket and dropped. They fall in confusion and the picking out then begins by the one who cast them, each player casting his own straws. . . . men and women may take part.<sup>33</sup>

While the number of sticks or straws varied from tribe to tribe, as did the method of scoring, the game per se remained basically the same.



Magico-religious aids were employed to influence the outcome of the contest, both when it was played on social occasions and when it was employed in conjunction with certain medicinal and climatic rites.<sup>34</sup>

## TRIBAL DISTRIBUTION

	Social	Mortuary	Climatic	Medicinal	Fertility
Siouan Family	Congaree Quapaw				
Iroquoian Family	Cherokee Huron Seneca			Huron	
Caddoan Family					
Algonquian Family	Delaware Mahican Massachuset Munsee Nanticoke Narraganset Powhatan		Delaware		Delaware Mahican  Munsee Nanticoke
Muskogean Family	Alabama Creek				



## FUNCTIONAL DISTRIBUTION OF GAMES OF PHYSICAL SKILL AND CHANCE

	Social	Mortuary	Climatic	Medicinal	Fertility
Alabama, Congaree, Cherokee, Creek, Massachuset, Narraganset Powhatan, Seneca, Quapaw (9)	+				
Huron (1)	+			+	
Delaware (1)	+		+		+
Manican, Munsee, Nanticoke (3)	+				+
Total Societies	14		1	1	4



## GAMES OF PHYSICAL SKILL, STRATEGY AND CHANCE

Moccasin Game (Hidden Ball)

The game of hidden ball was common throughout North America in various forms. Among the Eastern Woodland tribes, the game was played both on ceremonial and social occasions. Although it was possible for two individuals to play against each other, the moccasin game was more frequently contested between teams. One team, in full view of the other, hid a small object (bean, bullet, ball, or pebble) under one of several moccasins (socks, gloves or a combination of these articles) placed on the floor between the two rows of contestants.<sup>35</sup> Members of the opposing side then attempted to point out the location of the hidden object. Once the item had been found, points were awarded according to the number of guesses, and the hiding/seeking roles were reversed.

The Iroquois played the game thus:

Two persons, one from each team, "chose up" by placing hand over hand on the pointer stick, and the side whose representative comes out "hand on top" is the first side to seek. . . . A member of the losing team then hides a ball bearing under or in one of the moccasins. . . . The members of the seeking side take turns at guessing, but the ball bearing is hid anew by the same hider after each guess. When a person guesses incorrectly, he passes the pointer stick to his neighbour. When there is a correct guess, the hider indicates the success by hitting the moccasin on the floor, so that the object makes a loud sound. At this point the teams switch roles: the . . . ball bearing is handed to the new hiding side, the pointer stick is given to the new seeking side, and the whole procedure of hide-and-seek is repeated. The new hider is the neighbour to the right of the last person to hide on his team, and the new seeker is the neighbour to the left of the last person to guess on his team. . . . There are two scorekeepers, one for each side, who sit at the head of the two rows of players and move the counters according to the guesses of the seekers. At the beginning of the game, all the counters are in a pool. As the game progresses, . . . a ball bearing is laid aside each time a seeker misses, and when six of these have been moved to one side, representing six consecutive misses, a counter is awarded to the hiding side from the pool. After the pool is exhausted, counter sticks are transferred from one side to the other.<sup>36</sup>





Although the game paraphernalia, the scoring mechanism and the number of points necessary to secure victory varied throughout the Eastern Culture Area, the basic format of the game remained the same. The moccasin game was always accompanied by singing and drumming, irrespective of the occasion on which it was played.<sup>37</sup> Strangely enough, while men and women played together on ceremonial occasions, only the males participated in social games. The latter were usually occasions of extensive gambling.

#### TRIBAL DISTRIBUTION

	Social	Mortuary	Climatic	Medicinal	Fertility
Siouan Family	Quapaw	Quapaw			
Iroquoian Family	Cayuga Huron Mohawk Onondaga Seneca Tobacco	Cayuga  Mohawk Onondaga Seneca		Huron	
Caddoan Family					
Algonquian Family	Delaware Shawnee	Delaware			
Muskogean Family	Alabama Chickasaw Choctaw Creek	Choctaw			



## FUNCTIONAL DISTRIBUTION OF GAMES OF PHYSICAL SKILL, STRATEGY AND CHANCE

	Social	Mortuary	Climatic	Medicinal	Fertility
Alabama, Chickasaw, Creek, Shawnee, Tobacco (5)	+				
Cayuga, Choctaw, Delaware, Mohawk, Onondaga, Seneca, Quapaw (7)	+	+			
Huron (1)	+			+	
Total Societies	13	7		1	



## GAMES OF CHANCE

Bowl Game

The bowl game appears to have been more popular with the northern tribes of the Eastern Culture Area. This game was usually played indoors and saw two teams pitted against each other.

The playing implements consisted of a wooden bowl or woven-cane basket, six to eight fruit-stone dice blackened on one side, and a pre-determined number of counter-beans or tally-sticks used to keep score.<sup>38</sup>

Before play began, a folded blanket was placed on the ground to act as a cushion upon which the bowl was struck. Hitting the bowl against the ground caused the fruit-stones to "jump" and hence change their pattern. Points were awarded, following each "throw," in accordance with the colours displayed on the dice. Only two competitors--one from each team--played at any one time, continuing until one was eliminated, when his place was taken by a team member. The game continued in this fashion until all the scoring beans had been won by one party.<sup>39</sup>

The method of scoring varied considerably from tribe to tribe, and even within tribes, according to the occasion on which the game was played. The following account, nevertheless, provides some insight into the Iroquoian game:

When all six peach pits turn up one color after being jounced in the bowl, five points are scored; and when five pits turn up one color and a single pit is of the opposite color, then one point is scored. With the scoring of each point, a bean is transferred to the player who won the point, and the object of the game is that one . . . [team] should accumulate all 101 beans. At the beginning each player is allotted six beans, the other 89 beans being placed in a pool. When a player wins six beans from his opponent, the captured beans are placed in a pile. . . . The loser is "retired" and is replaced by another player from



his . . . [team] , who receives six new beans from the pool of 89. This procedure continues until the pool is exhausted, and thereafter the winner of a point receives a bean from the pile of the opposite . . . [team] until one side captures all the beans. A successful throw by an individual allows him to make a second throw before relinquishing the bowl to his opponent.<sup>40</sup>

This game, played on both social and sacred occasions by the men and women alike, was always accompanied by gambling. Similarly, various magico-religious agents were employed to influence the course of the contests.<sup>41</sup>

#### TRIBAL DISTRIBUTION

	Social	Mortuary	Climatic	Medicinal	Fertility
Siouan Family	Quapaw				
Iroquoian Family	Cayuga Cherokee Huron Mohawk Onondaga Seneca Susquehanna Tobacco Tuscarora	Cayuga  Mohawk Onondaga Seneca		Cayuga  Huron Mohawk Onondaga Seneca	Cayuga  Huron Mohawk Onondaga Seneca Susquehanna  Tuscarora
Caddoan Family					
Algonquian Family	Delaware Mahican Massachuset Munsee Nanticoke Narraganset Shawnee	Delaware    Shawnee			Delaware Mahican  Munsee Nanticoke
Muskogean Family	Creek				

#### Hand-Dice Game

This game was, in many ways, similar to the previously discussed bowl game. The essential implements consisted of a number of dice, and a





blanket, onto which the dice were cast. The dice, usually four to eight, possessed two faces distinguished by colours or markings. They were constructed of a variety of materials--flat pebbles, split canes, fruit-stones, grains of corn or discs of bone, and were thrown by hand into the air or allowed to fall freely upon the blanket.<sup>42</sup> The game of hand-dice was played throughout the Eastern Woodlands Area, either between opposing teams, in the same manner as the bowl game, or between individuals. In both instances, the method of scoring was the same as that employed for the bowl game, by the tribes in question. This game, too, was a popular social activity, and has been noted in ritual. Like its counterpart, it involved gambling on the part of the competitors and spectators, who, more often than not, relied on sacred charms and incantations to favourably sway the outcome of the contest.<sup>43</sup>

## TRIBAL DISTRIBUTION

	Social	Mortuary	Climatic	Medicinal	Fertility
Siouan Family	Catawba Congaree				
Iroquoian Family	Cayuga Cherokee Huron Mohawk Onondaga Seneca Tuscarora	Cayuga  Mohawk Onondaga Seneca		Cayuga  Huron Mohawk Onondaga Seneca	Cayuga   Onondaga Seneca
Caddoan Family	Caddo				
Algonquian Family	Delaware Massachuset Shawnee				
Muskogean Family	Alabama Choctaw Creek Natchez				



## FUNCTIONAL DISTRIBUTION OF GAMES OF CHANCE

	Social	Mortuary	Climatic	Medicinal	Fertility
Alabama, Caddo, Catawba, Congaree, Cherokee, Choctaw, Creek, Massachuset, Narraganset, Natchez, Quapaw (11)	+				
Cayuga, Mohawk, Onondaga, Seneca (4)	+	+		+	+
Huron (1)	+			+	+
Susquehanna, Tuscarora (2)	+				+
Delaware (1)	+	+			+
Shawnee (1)	+	+			
Mahican, Munsee, Nanticoke (3)	+				+
Total Societies	23	6		5	11



Summary

The fifteen play activities hitherto discussed served both secular and sacred ends. All were played on social occasions and all occupied a place in the rituals of certain tribes. When classified on the basis of their outcome determinants, the games were found to fall into the following categories:

Games of Pure Physical Skill

Archery

Footraces

Hoop and Pole (Chunkee)

Ring and Pin

Games of Physical Skill and Strategy

Football

Handball

Lacrosse

Pole-Ball

Shinny

Snow-Snake

Wrestling

Games of Physical Skill and Chance

Stick (Straw) Game

Games of Physical Skill, Strategy and Chance

Moccasin Game (Hidden Ball)

Games of Chance

Bowl Game

Hand-Dice Game



No games of pure strategy, or strategy and chance, were discovered within the region. Roberts and his contemporaries<sup>44</sup> have hypothesised that games of strategy are more likely to occur in social systems that exhibit high levels of political integration and social stratification. If this is the case, then it would appear that the societies of the Eastern Culture Area were not complex enough to possess games in which the principal attribute was the element of strategy.





DISTRIBUTION OF GAME TYPES  
IN FORTY EASTERN CULTURE AREA SOCIETIES

	Physical Skill	Physical Skill & Strategy	Physical Skill & Chance	Physical Skill, Strategy & Chance	Chance	Strategy	Strategy & Chance
Catawba, Creek, Delaware, Huron, Seneca (5)	+	+	+	+	+		
Cherokee, Massachuset (2)	+	+	+		+		
Cayuga, Choctaw, Mohawk, Onondaga (4)	+	+		+	+		
Alabama (1)		+	+	+	+		
Shavnee (1)		+		+	+		
Quapaw (1)	+	+			+		
Congaree (1)	+		+		+		
Natchez (1)	+	+			+		
Chickasaw, Tobacco (2)	+	+		+			
Nanticoke, Narraganset (2)		+	+		+		



## DISTRIBUTION OF GAME TYPES (Continued)

	Physical Skill	Physical Skill & Strategy	Physical Skill & Chance	Physical Skill, Strategy & Chance	Chance	Strategy	Strategy & Chance
Powhatan (1)	+	+	+				
Mañican, Munsee (2)			+		+		
Cneida, Seminole, Timucua (3)	+	+					
Tuscarora (1)		+			+		
Caddo (1)	+				+		
Bayougoula, Cusabo, Eno, Guale, Houma (5)	+						
Susquehanna (1)					+		
Caluse, Chiaha, Coosa, Coweta, Mobile, Tuskegee (6)		+					
Total Societies	26	30	14	13	23		



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